

Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет

**КОНЕВСКИХ Ольга Викторовна**

**Выпускная квалификационная работа**

**ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЙ ЭСТОНСКОЙ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ ЭЛИТЫ  
О ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ ЭСТОНСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ: 1999-2019 ГОДЫ**

Уровень образования: магистратура

Направление 41.04.05. «Международные отношения»

Основная образовательная программа ВМ.5559. «Исследования Балтийских и Северных стран»

Научный руководитель:

кандидат политических наук,

доцент Дмитрий Александрович Ланко,

кафедра «Европейских исследований»

ФМО СПбГУ

Рецензент:

кандидат политических наук,

профессор Леонид Александрович Карабешкин,

декан факультета международных отношений

Евроакадемия, Таллин

Санкт-Петербург

2019

Магистерская работа выполнена в рамках программы двух дипломов по международным отношениям Российско-Финляндского трансграничного университета

This Master's thesis has been completed within the double degree program in international relations of the Finnish-Russian Cross-Border University

## **ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЙ ЭСТОНСКОЙ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ ЭЛИТЫ О ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ ЭСТОНСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ: 1999-2019 ГОДЫ**

**Аннотация.** В данной магистерской работе изучается эволюция внешней политики Эстонии с 1999 по 2019 год, в частности, рассматривается вопрос наличия внешнеполитического консенсуса среди эстонских политических партий. Цель диссертации заключается в понимании того, существует ли внешнеполитический консенсус среди политических партий Эстонии и каким образом консенсус отражается в предвыборных программах и манифестах политических партий. Кроме того, в исследовании изучается роль политических партий в принятии внешнеполитических решений в Эстонской Республике. В магистерской диссертации применяются теория консенсуса, представленная Ричардом Мелансоном, и концепция республиканского либерализма, разработанная Эндрю Моравчиком.

Затрагивая методологический аспект, стоит отметить, что в диссертации используется метод кейс-стади в сочетании с качественным контент-анализом (QCA) и методом кодирования. Так, с помощью метода качественного контент-анализа производится анализ партийных предвыборных программ и партийных манифестов. В ходе исследования проанализировано 28 избирательных программ и манифестов политических партий с 1999 по 2019 год. Также при помощи метода качественного контент-анализа проанализированы экспертные интервью, проведенные автором по теме исследования. Наконец, проведен анализ процесса ратификации трех внешнеполитических документов в Рийгикогу (Парламент Эстонии).

В результате проведенного анализа, автор данной работы приходит к выводу, что в Эстонии существует два вида консенсуса. Анализ избирательных программ и партийных манифестов выявил, что во внешней политике Эстонии существует политический консенсус. Кроме того, на основе анализа результатов голосования по трем законопроектам в Рийгикогу доказано наличие процедурного консенсуса. Более того, доказано, что в период с 1999 по 2019 год каких-либо серьёзных изменений в эволюции национального консенсуса по вопросам внешней политики не произошло, что объясняется твердой приверженностью к коалиционному договору, который сглаживает противоречия и создает атмосферу консенсуса. Внешняя политика Эстонии формируется путем взаимодействия Парламента, оппозиции и Кабинета министров, в состав которого входят представители правящих партий.

Проведённое исследование позволило выявить новые аспекты в сфере выбранной проблематики. В магистерской диссертации внешняя политика Эстонии изучается через

призму либеральной теории международных отношений, также результаты исследования вносят вклад в изучение роли политических партий в принятии внешнеполитических решений. Таким образом, данная работа может быть полезна для анализа внешней политики и интересна эстонской политической элите.

Ключевые слова: Эстонская Республика, внешняя политика Эстонии, внешнеполитический консенсус, политические партии, страны Балтии.

## **EVOLUTION OF THE PERCEPTION OF ESTONIAN POLITICAL ELITE ON FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA, 1999-2019**

**Abstract.** This study covers the evolution of Estonian foreign policy from 1999 to 2019 and in particular the developments regarding the foreign policy consensus among Estonian political parties. The dissertation aims to understand whether there is a foreign policy consensus among Estonian political parties since 1999 and how it manifests in party electoral programs and manifestos. The role of political parties in foreign policy decision-making in Estonia is studied as well. Model of consensus theory elaborated by Richard Melanson and the concept of Republican Liberalism presented by Andrew Moravcsik are applied in the thesis.

Methodologically, the thesis adopts the form of a single case study using the qualitative content analysis, and coding as part of it. Firstly, party electoral programs and party manifestos are analyzed with the help of qualitative content analysis (QCA). Overall, 28 electoral programs and manifestos from 1999 to 2019 are included in my research. Next, QCA of expert interviews, conducted by the author regarding the topic of the research, is made. Finally, the ratification process of three foreign policy documents in the Riigikogu is analyzed.

As a result of the analysis two kinds of consensus were found in the case of Estonia. According to the analysis of the electoral programs and party manifestos, policy consensus exists in Estonian foreign policy. Based on the analysis of the voting results, procedural consensus is also present in the Estonian case. There have not been any major changes in foreign policy consensus from 1999 to 2019 because of a strong commitment to the coalition treaty that mitigates the situation and creates the atmosphere of consensus. Foreign policymaking in Estonia is the interplay between the parliament, the opposition, and the Cabinet, which consists of representatives of the ruling parties.

The results of this research have produced significant and fresh findings. This study contributes to expand the study of Estonian foreign policy under a light liberalist point of view; and it also makes a contribution to the studies of the role of political parties in foreign policy

decision-making. This work can be useful for Estonian political elite and foreign policy analysis learning.

*Keywords:* Republic of Estonia, Estonian foreign policy, foreign policy consensus, political parties, Baltic states.

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## **List of abbreviations**

CFE – Conventional Forces in Europe

EKRE – Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond

QCA – Qualitative content analysis

ENP - European Neighborhood Policy

ERL – Eestimaa Rahvaliid

EU – European Union

GDP – Gross domestic product

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

UN – United Nations

USA – United States of America



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background**

Why to study foreign policy and political parties? Why consensus matters? Why is the Estonian case interesting? Reasons for choosing this topic and the case of Estonia are conceptual and practical. First of all, there is quite a lot of research in which the link between foreign policy and domestic policy is studied (see Paterson, 1981; Lumsdaine, 1996; Joly & Dandoy, 2018; Margaret G. Hermann & Charles F. Hermann, 1989). Nevertheless, the lack of knowledge about the role of political parties in foreign decision-making in Estonia makes this topic relevant to study.

Second, consensus as an element of decision-making is taken seriously in politics because it plays an important role in political discourse (Melanson, 2005). It has been argued that the existence of it makes foreign policy more effective and provides useful insights into domestic landscape of the state (Makarychev, 1998: 149).

Third, looking on the main emphases of Estonian foreign policy, we can see that there was a foreign policy consensus up until 2004, when the major goals of the EU and NATO membership were achieved (Woehrel, 2007: 1). After that within a few years, Estonian foreign policy was focused closely on further integration in EU mechanisms while other foreign policy initiatives that could break the inter-party consensus were not included in the agenda. However, the international situation changed significantly in 2014 with the situation in Crimea and in 2015 with the migration crisis. One of the parties (Conservative People's Party of Estonia, EKRE) which is presented in the Riigikogu (Parliament of Estonia), seems to have a different view of the foreign policy vector of Estonia. EKRE is a populist party which advocates maintaining Estonian ethnicity, preventing immigration from outside of the EU, and taking a Eurosceptical position. Taking into account the position of EKRE one could make the argument that because of that, the internal foreign policy consensus is under pressure or slowly breaking apart. However, it should be studied further whether this is actually the case or whether it does not hold true in this case.

Finally, it is precious that someone from outside of Estonia have taken such topic to study, which on the one hand, may help to better understand both the Estonian foreign policy choices in the past and present, and on the other hand, contributes to the Estonian research and spread the knowledge about Estonia.

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<sup>1</sup> “Let us be Estonians, but let us also become Europeans!”

## 1.2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In my thesis, I apply liberal theory of international relations because according to Liberalism, domestic policy influences the foreign policy (Moravcsik, 2010). More precisely, in my study, I apply the key claims of Liberalism as formulated by Andrew Moravcsik (1997). According to him, there are three approaches in Liberalism: ideational liberalism, commercial liberalism and republican liberalism. In the Estonian case, I use Moravcsik's ideas concerning Republican Liberalism, i.e. how social groups, represented by political parties contribute to foreign policy making (Moravcsik, 1997: 517).

Put it differently, there is an analytical approach regarding foreign policy studies, which focuses on the internal political factors of the foreign policy decision-making process (Lanko, 2011: 76). When studying Estonian foreign policy line and the role of political parties I employ this approach, which explicitly indicates the connection between foreign and domestic policy. Using this approach, I focus on all the relevant elements which let us understand what the role of parties in the decision-making mechanism is and what concrete position they have on given foreign policy issues. I consider that political parties are one of the main actors in foreign policymaking (Bow & Black, 2008: 7-9). It has been argued that the dominance of a party for a long period of time matters more than the distribution of power at any moment (Thérien & Noel, 2000: 153). I also support Joly and Dandoy's point of view that there can be nonetheless some disagreements about how to achieve foreign policy goals among political parties (Joly & Dandoy, 2018: 513), that is why I study party electoral programs and manifestos in order to see these differences (or lack of them).

In particular, I am interested in foreign policy consensus. There are several definitions of the concept "consensus" which are presented by Peter Kerr (1999), Thomas Baylis (1989), Edward Shils (2005) and Richard Heffernan (2002). Here I apply Shills' and Heffernan's definitions of consensus, who state that consensus reflects the dominant set of ideas and that such ideas structure political agenda in different ways (Heffernan, 2002: 744). Later, these ideas define the main vector of the policy and define what is possible and impossible to do (Ibid: 744). Besides, in my research, I follow Melanson's model of consensus, which comprises policy, cultural and procedural elements. In the Master's thesis I try to find out whether these elements are present in the case of Estonia.

For understanding the context, I have studied literature on Estonian political system and Estonian foreign policy line. In my research I pay attention to the domestic legislation of foreign policy. I noticed that during the past three decades, Estonian political system and parties have been studied by both Estonian and foreign researchers (see Loik and Veebel, 2011; Pettai and Toomla,

2003; Fitzmaurice, 2001; Lagerspetz and Vogt, 2013; Taagepera, 2000, 2007; Mölder, 2012, 2013, 2019; Veebel, 2014; Lanko, 2015, Mezhevich and Grozovsky, 2013; Vorotnikov, 2015). Besides, I assume that the view of Estonia's history and its foreign policy is quite different and sometimes even antipodal in Estonia and Russia, particularly on the issues of the Soviet past and NATO enlargement. For example, Vorotnikov (2015: 160), emphasizes that there are two attitudes towards the period when Estonia was a part of the USSR, from one point of view it was a period of occupation, from the other point of view, it was a voluntary decision of the Estonians to become a member of the USSR.

Estonian foreign policy and its political system have been covered in previous studies. However, I have not found studies which would have applied the theory of consensus to the case of Estonia. Indisputably, the idea of the presence of consensus on the issues of foreign policy has been formulated in some articles, nevertheless, this theory has not been elaborated in details in the case of Estonia, and therefore, there seems to be a gap in literature.

### 1.3. Research Questions, Methods and Materials

The main aim of the thesis is to examine the evolution of Estonian foreign policy from 1999 to 2019 and in particular to analyse the developments regarding the foreign policy consensus among Estonian political parties. The choice of this time frame is explained by the fact that since 1999 the present political system based on the major role of coalition agreement has been formed. The existence of consensus is considered as the most important factor of stability and success of both domestic policy, and foreign policy (Vorotnikov, 2015: 165). It has been argued that consensus is necessary for the development of national economy and maintaining the national unity. Moreover, consensus demonstrates the effective functioning of decision-making mechanism in the sphere of public administration (Ibid: 165).

In order to achieve the main goal of the research, I will first study the link between the positions of parties and foreign policy in International Relations literature. Moreover, I will identify differences (if any) on foreign policy issues among political parties represented in the Riigikogu.

Estonian foreign policy, including the foreign policy lines of political parties, will be analyzed with the help of the electoral programs and platforms of main political parties, Estonian foreign policy documents and data obtained from the author-conducted interviews with the experts in Estonian foreign policy. Electoral programs are valuable materials for mapping the political direction of society. Thus, the following research will be devoted to a definite country, cohort and time, and it addresses the gap in the literature on foreign policy of Estonia.

Thereby, the thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Has there been foreign policy consensus (policy and procedural) among Estonian political parties since 1999? How has it been manifest in party electoral programs and manifestos or decision-making process in the parliament?
2. Have there been changes in foreign policy consensus from 1999 to 2019, and if yes, why so?
3. What is the role of political parties in foreign policy decision-making in Estonia?

My hypothesis is the following: there has been domestic consensus among political parties represented in the Riigikogu on Estonian foreign policy since 1999. In order to test the hypothesis, I apply Republican Liberalism elaborated by Moravscik and the Consensus Theory presented by Melanson and qualitative content analysis of my primary data.

Methodologically, this thesis adopts the form of a single case study (Estonia as a case) using the qualitative content analysis, and coding as part of it. In practical terms, main Estonia's foreign policy emphases will become basic units to make a qualitative content analysis in searching out, summarizing and organizing the information needed to explain the existing of consensus. In my research, I consider that both documents such as electoral programs and author-conducted interview materials will help to find answers to the research questions. Firstly, I analyze party electoral programs and party manifestos, utilizing qualitative content analysis (QCA). Overall, 28 election programs and manifestos from 1999 to 2019 are included in my research. Next, I make a QCA of interviews conducted with experts in the topic of the research. 5 interviews were conducted between December 2017 and February 2019. Finally, I analyze the ratification process of three foreign policy documents in the Riigikogu,

#### 1.4. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters including the introduction. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework, where attention is paid to the link between foreign policy and domestic policy; a brief presentation which includes a working definition of "consensus" as well as its main elements, considers the scholarly debate which argued for the introduction of the domestic political factors in the study of foreign policy. And since consensus consists of the elements (Melanson, 2005: 6-12), the focus should be shifted to these special elements which can indicate the existing of consensus. The third chapter is about the methodology which introduces the choice of a single case study and continues exposing the way in which a qualitative content analysis is applied to the data directed by a theoretical approach. Moreover, the chapter provides an overview of data and data analyses applied in the study. The fourth chapter, as a

contextualization for the study, introduces the Estonian political system and its foreign policy line during the last two decades. The fifth chapter starts the empirical part of the thesis describing the analysis of the main emphases in the party electoral programs and manifestos for the Riigikogu elections since 1999. Next, it covers interview analyses and ratification process analyses. The sixth chapter summarizes all the findings and elaborates on limitations and recommendations for the future research.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The chapter on the theoretical framework of the Master's thesis is divided into three sub-chapters and further three subsections. In the first sub-chapter and its subsection, the relationship between foreign and domestic policy is examined as well as the role of political parties as foreign policy actors. The second sub-chapter is devoted to the definition of foreign policy consensus and a description of its main elements. Finally, the third subchapter gives an explanation of how the existence or absence of domestic consensus on foreign policy influences the state position and its foreign policy.

### 2.1. Relationship between Foreign Policy and Domestic Policy

The main aim of this section is to discuss the influence of domestic policy on foreign policy. In particular, I am interested in the role of political parties in foreign policymaking and decision-making.

When we look at the relationship between domestic and foreign policy, we may claim that there are two approaches in International Relations: first, there is a systemic approach based on the assumption that the study of international relations methodologically seems more forward-looking to study the limitations that system imposes on the foreign policy of states; second, there is an analytical approach, whose supporters are paying attention to the internal political factors of the foreign policy decision-making process (Lanko, 2011: 76).

“The idea that international politics is shaped by the internal politics of states stems from an old, diversified, and enduring tradition of international relations” (Thérien & Noel, 2000: 151). Recently, this tradition has been rejuvenized by the growing recognition, but international factors cannot only explain the most fundamental transformations (Kratochwil 1993, 63).

As for the role of political parties, Bow and Black (2008: 7-9) state that political parties play an important role in foreign policymaking. In the case of Estonia, international relations are managed by the Riigikogu, the Government and the President of the Republic, whose role is rather representative. The government enters into international agreements and presents them to the parliament for ratification (Foreign Relations Act). The legislative power is represented by the Riigikogu, which is formed by the representatives of political parties who are elected at free elections for a four-year term (Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act). So, one can assume that political parties are the main drivers behind foreign policy in most parliamentary democracies (Timmermans et al., 2006: 391), where Estonia is no exception. Jean-Philippe Thérien and Alain Noel (2000) state that “in foreign as in domestic policy, patterns tend to be

established at critical junctures and change only incrementally thereafter. The dominance of a party over a long period probably matters more than the distribution of power at any moment” (Thérien & Noel, 2000: 153). Nevertheless, despite the broader agreement on foreign policy goals, there can be some disagreements about how to pursue them, and these differences can be the important details for parties that can play a main role in foreign policymaking. That is why, much attention should be paid to parties’ manifestos as they are one of the main predictors of future policies, where official priorities and preferences of the party are listed (Joly & Dandoy, 2018: 513). Besides, it is important to study the debates on foreign policy issues because during the debates parties demonstrate their foreign policy initiatives which later can be implemented in the foreign policy of the state. In accordance with mandate theory, the winning party receives the mandate from the voters, so the party should follow the campaign promises and the course which is presented in the manifesto (Ibid: 514).

Bow and Black (2008: 9) notice that if governing party changes, it is not for granted that foreign policy will change to another orientation and this is true for nearly all western liberal democracies. This means that political leaders in modern liberal democracies cannot make radical political changes due to the necessity to hold together different political coalitions, while expecting resistance from entrenched bureaucratic interests and processes (Bow & Black, 2008: 9). This argument is rather curious for the current research because it raises the question of evolution of perceptions on foreign policy among political parties in Estonia since 1999.

### *2.1.1. Relationship between foreign policy and domestic policy in Liberalism*

Liberalism claims that national characteristics of individual states define their actions on the international arena (Moravcsik, 2010: 2). Liberal theory stresses mutual benefits and international cooperation among actors. The adherents of liberalism argue that all states have the same goals and behaviors. They stand for political freedom, democracy and constitutionally guaranteed rights, and privileged the liberty of the individual and equality before the law (Burchill, 2005: 55). Liberal theory emphasizes that state can have a choice in its foreign policy and they are, in a broad sense, instrumentally rational in foreign policy-making. (Moravcsik, 2010: 2).

Liberal theorists such as Michael Doyle, say that states try to build a more peaceful world order. They often do so because they have learned that in many instances cooperation is a better strategy than conflict (Burchill, 2005: 60). Von Mises assumes that there is no opposition between domestic policy and foreign policy, that is why a question about the privilege position of one of them could not be raised. Both domestic and foreign policy have the same goal: “peace.

It aims at peaceful cooperation just as much between nations as within each nation” (Von Mises, 2005: 76).

In my thesis I apply the key claims of Liberalism as formulated by Andrew Moravcsik. According to Moravcsik, there are three core liberal assumptions which are based on the central elements of liberal theory: social demands, state preferences, and the resulting patterns of national preferences in world politics. Moravcsik has allocated three approaches in liberalism: ideational liberalism, commercial liberalism and republican liberalism, which are further presented.

Ideational Liberalism considers public groups and their preferences as one of the key factors that influences foreign policy of the state. States are the representatives of preferences, ideals and interests of individuals and public groups on the international scene. Each state includes a configuration of social identities which is characterized by the existence of public preferences which are formulated by individuals united in social groups. At the same time, social identities of social groups depend on various factors (for example, the location of national borders; linguistic, cultural or religious identifications; historical experience) (Moravcsik, 1997: 514). The most powerful social groups are able to influence the decision-making process and the behavior of states in the international arena through manipulation of information, establishment of restrictions on markets, or through other types of influence and coercion (Ibid: 514). International relations become more manageable, because of the influence of public opinion. Influence of social context within the state generates external effects for other actors and it can explain the emergence of the interstate conflict or, on the contrary, cooperation between countries. In accordance with it, ideational liberalism focuses on such sources of ideological preferences as national identity, political identity, and socio-economic identity. Political identity examines the commitment of individuals and social groups to individual political institutions that determines the type of political regime in the state (Moravcsik, 2008: 240).

Commercial Liberalism states that social demands are expressed through the state. The state is the main actor in international relations, but social groups are involved in the formation of social requirements and they use the state as a platform for promoting their interests, consequently, they affect the behavior of political actors in the global arena. The central element of commercial liberal approach is the idea of economic interdependence, as claimed by approach, in case of general division of labor, maintenance of uniform system of political and economic institutes profit will be evenly shared among all participants of the free markets (Moravcsik, 1997: 515).

Republican Liberalism explains the influence of various social groups and their preferences on the behavior of the state on the world scene. The primary actors of world politics are



individuals and social groups that demonstrate rational and non-risky behavior and act collectively to promote their interests (Ibid: 517). The interests of social groups determine the preferences of the state and its goals in world politics. Thus, state is not an independent actor, it is a representative institute and a subject of competition among social groups. Preferences of states are formed before interaction with each other. If preferences of states are in harmony with each other, their relations are characterized by peaceful coexistence or low conflict, however if preferences of states are opposite to each other, inter-state conflict is possible (Doyle, 1986: 1153).

Moravcsik emphasizes that the greater the political influence of a social group, the more it is represented in representative institutions and the less it depends on external influences. If political influence is concentrated among few groups, foreign policy is more likely to focus on confrontation than on cooperation. States with a non-Republican form of government reflect the interests of a few groups, such as their elites. In conditions of equal distribution of political influence in society, that is, when social groups have the opportunity to determine the preferences of the state, politicians will try to avoid conflicts in the international arena. Countries with a Republican form of government, unlike other states, will adhere to similar interests on the international arena. If all state power is concentrated in the hands of few groups, the foreign policy of the state will be carried out in their interests, but the risks and costs will be born by other social groups with less influence. In addition, the interests of privileged groups, which tend to be small in size, are more subject to change than the interests of society in general (Moravcsik, 1997: 525).

In the Estonian case, I may start from Moravcsik's ideas concerning Republican Liberalism, i.e. how social groups, represented by political parties contribute to making foreign policy. As it is mentioned above, foreign policy is a derivative of relations between domestic social groups (political parties). It means that political parties compete through foreign policy ideas with other parties to determine the vector of the state's foreign policy, which raises the question about the existence of debates on foreign policy issues in the country. At the same time, if there is no debate on these issues, one could suggest the presence of national consensus on foreign policy issues between the main political parties, which correlates with the main research question of the Master's thesis.

The theory of Moravcsik helps us to understand that it is necessary to study domestic politics and domestic debates to better understand the foreign policy of the country *per se* and, moreover, by studying a particular case, the mechanism of understanding how the foreign policy could be developed.

Thus, the most common approach has been to assume that foreign policy has its sources in domestic politics. These three approaches argue that internal factors such as political and economic ideology, national character or socioeconomic structure determine how countries behave toward the world beyond their borders. According to Moravcsik, foreign policy is rooted in state's internal dynamics. That is why, in order to better understand why the state behaves it does, one should pay attention to the domestic policy, to examine the preferences and configurations of key domestic actors which are presented in the Master's thesis as political parties (Ibid: 527). Moreover, looking at domestic policy and the positions of political parties one could find out whether there are differences on foreign policy issues between the parties because if there are no, the theory of consensus can be applicable to the case of research. The presence of national consensus on foreign policy issues is considered to be a good element of foreign policy of the state because consensus means that the country conducts the stable foreign policy, the country is a reliable partner in world politics with the long-term political aims (Grigor, 2015: 353).

## 2.2. Definition of the Concept: Foreign Policy Consensus and Its Basic Elements

Although domestic consensus on foreign policy or its absence among political parties is a hot topic in modern international relations studies, there is no universal definition for the concept. Here I start from one of the most cited definitions of consensus in international relations which is proposed by Edward Shils. More than three decades ago Shils offered a classic definition of consensus. According to him, consensus is a system of society state belief. It exists when an elite is in approximate agreement with the society in its beliefs about what decisions should be made and have the feeling of unity with the society as a whole (as cited in Melanson, 2005: 3).

Thomas Baylis proposes another definition of consensus. He outlines that the term "consensus" is usually understood in political context as a "collective leadership". The idea of consensus is rather attractive at first glance because it means that there is a general agreement between the main actors which form foreign policy. Baylis argues that this form of governance tries not only to find the agreement between the most participants but also tries to mitigate the objections of the minority in order to reach the agreement which will satisfy all parties (Baylis, 1989: 15).

Peter Kerr (Kerr, 1999: 69), offers an alternative vision of definition of the term. He states that consensus is not a complete "convergence over policy", moreover, it is not adherence to a set of common beliefs and values. The confusion of definition was due to the fact that the word "consensus" goes from Latin and means "agreement". Nevertheless, one of the bases of party

interaction is disputation between them, that is why the notion that consensus is an agreement does not stand up to a moment's scrutiny (as cited in Heffernan, 2002: 743). Richard Heffernan shares the view of Kerr and argues that consensus in politics reflects the dominant set of ideas and that such ideas structure political agenda in different ways. Then, dominant ideas create the framework for further actions and form consensus politics. These ideas define the main vector of the policy and define what is possible and impossible to do. What is more, these ideas encourage politics to do what is possible (Heffernan, 2002: 744). Thus, consensus determines what political actors can and cannot do and promotes act according to the established agenda. In the Master's thesis, I mainly apply the definition of consensus by Karr and Heffernan.

Studying the domestic dimension of Estonian foreign policy implies a discussion about consensus. This element of decision-making is taken seriously in politics because it plays an important role in political discourse (Melanson, 2005: 6). It is quite difficult to arrive to consensus among all political parties that are represented in the parliament, even in cases where national positions are not far apart (Toje, 2008: 124). It should be mentioned that this form of governance is more common in the field of foreign policy, because the need for continuity is greater than in domestic politics. So, the existence of it makes foreign policy more effective and provides useful insights into domestic landscape of the state (Ibid, 119).

To answer the question whether there is a foreign policy consensus or not, it is necessary to find out what the consensus consists of. Richard Melanson in his book "American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Nixon to Clinton" (2005) proposes three main components of consensus: policy, cultural and procedural elements. The first element of consensus – policy consensus – includes a set of fundamental propositions about the nature of policy of the country, its main goals and specific orientation. Taking Estonia as a case, one can assume that this element of consensus can be presented in foreign policy vector of the country, but there are some fears that it can be breaking apart. To confirm or deny this assumption, the evolution of Estonian foreign policy from 1999 to 2019 will be examined in the Analytical Chapter of the Master's thesis. The choice of this time frame can be explained by the fact that in 1999 the elections in the Riigikogu were held and the present political system was formed.

The second element – cultural consensus – consists of a set of values that are shared both by the society and political elite. The definition of cultural consensus is closely connected with the concept of national identity; in the case of Estonia it might be *eestlus* (estonianness). Estonianness as a concept consists of different elements of national culture which derive from the time of national awakening, the heritage of the Baltic Germans and the movement "Noor-Eesti". Gustav Suits, who is one of the ideological mentors of "Noor-Eesti", said the words that

later became a slogan of the group and the words that reflect the one side of Estonianness. He said, “Let us be Estonians, but let us also become Europeans!” (as cited in Stoklund & Niedermuller, 2001: 135). This slogan shows that Estonian intention to be a part of European civilization goes from the beginning of the XX century.

Peeter Vihalemm, social scientist at the University of Tartu, gives one more example which can be associated with the element of cultural consensus. Vihalemm outlines that Estonian self-definition on the political map belongs to Northern Europe (not to the Baltic States), belonging to this area is taken for granted both among political elite and among the academic elite and the most part of population of the country (as cited in A. Kirch et al., 2001).

The third element – procedural consensus – is a process of ratification of agreements/treaties and the voting process in Parliament (Melanson, 2005: 6-12). With the case of Estonia, it is rather valuable to examine the voting process on the three foreign policy bills in the Riigikogu and to study the Riigikogu’s sessions where these bills were discussed. In the analytical part of the thesis the following three voting processes will be analyzed: treaty on the Russian-Estonian border, NATO membership and the statement On the Future of the Institutions of the European Union.

Cultural element of consensus will not be studied in the current research. I will only focus on policy consensus and procedural consensus. Narrowing down the focus of my research on these two elements allows me to go deeper in my study.

Along with the main three elements of consensus, which are listed above, Melanson outlines one more element of this phenomenon. The foreign policy establishment can be called as the fourth element of consensus. Foreign policy establishment is a group of people who occupy important positions in the government and who have a say in formulating foreign policy vector (Ibid: 12). In the case of Estonia as a small country, it would be rather interesting to find out who is the influential figure or influential group of people on foreign policy decision-making, who creates Estonian foreign policy. Taking into account that this question is more practical than theoretical, it is one of the questions to the interviewees, of the researchers on Estonian foreign policy.

It has been argued that existence of domestic consensus on foreign policy means the stability and continuity of state policy (Makarychev, 1998: 149). That is why many countries are eager to have the domestic consensus. Therefore, I am interested in studying this phenomenon; also in the Estonian case one cannot say that there is a consensus, unless all components of consensus are found in the state policy.

### 2.3. Linkage between Foreign Policy Consensus and Position of the State

One can assume that an existence of opposition is an integral part of the democratic policy and civil society. The argument for it is that an activity of opposition that optimizes public decision-making. More than that, the institutionalizing of opposition contributes to the constructive resolution of conflicts between the interests of various social groups, also, it is a part of the mechanism of checks and balances in the structure of the relations in the area of power (Grigor, 2015: 352). Therefore, as Grigor (2015: 352) states, it is very important guarantee an opportunity to express alternative views to opposition and let it be an equal subject of political process. That is why the existence of consensus plays a significant role in the context of competition between the power and opposition in order to maintain political stability of the state. Nevertheless, consensus is becoming increasingly important not only as a tool for settlement of domestic political problems but also as a technology to solve foreign policy contradictions (Ibid: 352).

The search for consensus on key issues of state structure and state policy is the main goal of interaction between the government and the opposition. The success of the settlement of conflicts arising in the process of interaction between the government and the opposition is determined by their readiness to seek political consensus. Consensus ensures the legitimacy and effectiveness of the political system, as well as it provides homogeneity of political values and loyalty of the population to power (Ibid: 353).

The effective mechanism of foreign policy decision-making is one of the key elements of effective foreign policy. The subjective decisions calculated only on the near-term outlook, based on tactical reasons in this sphere are absolutely inadmissible as each step can have strategic character and long-term consequences. Therefore, all developed countries seek to do their utmost to create and improve the mechanism of foreign policy decision-making, where consensus plays an important role (Ibid: 353-354).

Melanson states that “the absence of consensus risks turning every foreign policy issue into a highly politicized domestic dispute” (Melanson, 2005: 3). On the contrary, when there is a consensus, it means that there are no great problems in domestic policy because there is no collision of positions between the ruling party and the opposition. Toje argues that consensus creates a framework and capabilities for achieving clearly defined goals of the state in the area of foreign policy (Toje, 2008: 124).

Furthermore, the process of globalization and being a member of international organizations and unities encourage countries to maintain stable policies and not to create ambiguous actions. Estonia has successfully integrated into European institutions since then

Estonian policy is expected to be first and foremost, stable and predictable, that means that the existence of domestic consensus is necessary (Kirch & Brökling, 2001: 71).

Based on what has been said above, one could consider that foreign policy consensus is one of the most important factors of stability and success of both domestic and foreign policy. Thus, it may be assumed that it is more likely that Estonia will be successful in its domestic and foreign policy if compared with the situation of not having consensus.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses data collection and methods of data analysis utilized for my research. Talking about the research strategy and the choice of the methods, the Master's thesis will adopt the form of a single case study using the qualitative content analysis, and coding as part of it. Expert interviews and analysis of party programs, foreign policy documents, and official documents are the important part of the research. The choice of the methods is explained by the research questions of the Master's thesis. As it is said in the introduction, the research questions are the following:

1. Has there been foreign policy consensus (policy and procedural) among Estonian political parties since 1999? How has it been manifested in party electoral programs and manifestos or decision-making process in the parliament?
2. Have there been changes in foreign policy consensus from 1999 to 2019, and if yes, why so?
3. What is the role of political parties in foreign policy decision-making in Estonia?

I use a single case study (focus is on the level of Estonia) because I am mostly interested in 'how' and 'why' questions regarding Estonian foreign policy. According to Yin, "'how' and 'why' questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies as the preferred research strategies. This is because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" (Yin, 1984: 6). In my research I study Estonian foreign policy from 1999 to 2019.

As for the choice of the qualitative content analysis, this method is systematic and it employs coding that can help to reduce the quantity of material and to focus on the research problem that will make the research more precise to the research questions of the thesis (Schreier 2014: 170).

Therefore, the structure of the methodological chapter is the following. The first sub-chapter is devoted to the description of the case study as a method of the research. The second sub-chapter elaborates on the content analysis. I will explain which form of it I apply and why this one has been chosen. The third sub-chapter and its sections cover the main sources of data collection and give an overview of their analysis.

#### 3. 1. Case Study

As it was mentioned above, the analysis of the thesis is based upon a single case study. Harrison (2017: 1) argues that a case study is an effective research method that helps to investigate

and understand complex issues (Harrison, 2017: 1-2). This method is actively applied across a number of disciplines, particularly the social science, law, political science to give the answers to a wide range of research questions (Ibid: 2).

There are a great number of definitions of the method in the literature. In the works of Yin (2014), Stake (1995), and Merriam (2009) the most common definitions of the method are given. The method used in my thesis is based on the definition suggested by Yin:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. It copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (*Yin, 1984:12-13*).

In the Master's thesis, I use the case of Estonia in order to examine the relationship between domestic policy and foreign policy in a post-Soviet democratic country, especially I am eager to demonstrate the role of political parties in foreign policy decision-making and to find out whether there have been differences between political parties on foreign policy issues since 1999. My hypothesis is the following: there has been domestic consensus on Estonian foreign policy since 1999 among political parties represented in the Riigikogu. In order to test the hypothesis, I apply Republican Liberalism elaborated by Moravcsik and the Consensus Theory by Melanson and qualitative content analysis of my primary data (see below).

Moreover, the case study is preferred in examining contemporary events which can be an extra argument of choosing this method for the research because the research problem of the thesis is related to the contemporary one (Yin, 1984: 8). The flexibility of the research approach is one of the main features of case-study, which let the researcher make the decisions during the researching new empirical data, discussions with colleagues. Flexibility in the collection and analysis of data, the lack of strict standards of research is the basis for criticism. The matter is that it is impossible to know the specifics of the studied object in advance, so the design of the study is always flexible and unpredictable (Atkinson & Coffey, 1979: 46). Researchers are free to switch from one method of data collection to another depending on the change of hypothesis, research situation; just as easily undergo changes and their relationship with the phenomenon under study, communication tactics.

Thus, the researcher does not need to choose the priority paradigm and operates in the form of a multi-paradigm approach. The latter is expressed in the absence of a specific theoretical framework, approach, analytical strategy which is developed in advance. They can be developed



or modified during the study progresses. Hence, a wide range of research methods and sources of data can be utilized to conduct the research (Polukhina, 2014: 5-6). According to Yin, there are several sources to collect the evidence for a case study, e.g. analysis of documents, interviews, direct observation, documentation, archival records and physical artifacts (Yin, 1984: 22). Some of the above-mentioned sources of data are used in the thesis (analysis of documents and interviews). It seems to me, that the usage of different methods allows to carry out the complex analysis of the research problem.

It is also important to outline advantages and disadvantages of case study. The positive aspects of using case studies consist of the facts that the examination of the data is most often conducted within the context of its use. One more advantage is the variation in terms of collective approaches to case studies allow for both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data (Zainal, 2007: 4).

As for the disadvantages of the method, they are the following. Yin says that case studies are often accused of lack of rigor (Yin, 1984: 23). The matter is that there are some situations when the researcher has allowed biased views to influence the direction of the pieces of evidence and conclusions (Ibid: 23). The second disadvantage of the method is a lack number of subjects for scientific generalization of the research problem, someone wonders how we can generalize from a single case. The next weak point refers to some possible difficulties to conduct the research and producing a lot of documentation. It is risky when the research has a longitudinal nature (Zainal, 2007: 5).

### 3.2. Content Analysis

The method of content analysis is one of the most common scientific tools for applied study of text information. The essence of this technique is the systematic allocation and fixation of certain units of text content, quantification of the data and subsequent interpretation of the results in order to assess and predict the actions of political actors (Borishpolets, 2005: 12). The method was introduced into scientific circulation at the end of the 1930s in the USA. In the field of political science, content analysis was used for the first time by Lasswell (Ibid: 13).

I will use qualitative content analysis as a method of analysis. This method will be used because QCA is systematic, flexible to a certain degree and reduces data. It is very convenient for my aims of the research because I will study the electoral programs and party manifestos, which cover wide issues, whilst QCA is a tool that will help me to reduce extra information and pay attention to the relevant one for my research. Schreier (2012) gives the following description of the method: “QCA is a method for describing the meaning of qualitative material in a systematic

way. It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding frame” (Schreier, 2012:1).

We can see that one of the most important part of QCA is a creation of coding frame that helps the researcher to structure the material by dividing the data on categories (dimensions) and a set of subcategories for each main category, which represents the aspects on which the researcher is going to focus on for conducting his own analysis (see Table 1). A lot of attention should be paid to the structure of a coding frame because it should be appropriate for answering the research questions. Building a coding frame helps to reduce the variety of meanings in the materials. However, there is a danger that some distinctions which are not covered by a coding frame, can be lost for the further analysis (Schreier, 2012:63).

Steps
1. Deciding on a research question
2. Selecting material
3. Building a coding frame
4. Segmentation
5. Trial coding
6. Evaluation and modifying the coding frame
7. Main analysis
8. Presenting and interpreting findings

**Table 1. Qualitative content analysis steps for coding and analyzing (Schreier, 2012: 7).**

Mayring (2000) argues that there is a number of procedures of QCA where the central approaches are the following: inductive category development and deductive category application. The main idea of inductive category development is

...to formulate a criterion of definition, derived from theoretical background and research question, which determines the aspects of the textual material taken into account. After that the material is worked through and the main categories step by step deduced. Then those categories are revised, reduces to the main categories and checked in respect to their reliability (Mayring, 2000: 80).

Another approach is a deductive category application “which works with the prior formulated, theoretical derived aspects of analysis, bringing them in connection with the text”. (Ibid: 81).

Schreier (2012) offers three ways of doing QCA which are quite similar to the above-mentioned. According to her, they are the following: concept-driven strategy, data-driven strategy and combination of concept-driven and data-driven strategies (Schreier, 2012:84). Concept-driven strategy looks like deductive category application offered by Mayring (2000). The main idea of the approach is to extract knowledge from a theory or logic (Ibid: 85). Data-driven strategy, on the contrary, could be identified with inductive category development with the main aim to let the researcher build a coding frame from the collected data (Ibid: 85). The third approach is a mix of the previous two strategies (Ibid: 86). It should be noted that the third “mix strategy” considers to be the most widely utilizing approach within QCA thanks to its flexibility for the researcher.

During my research, I apply to the third strategy that contains a combination of concept-driven strategy and data-driven strategy. The choice of the strategy is explained by the fact that this strategy does not limit the research and it allows me to mix concept-driven and data-driven strategies for main categories and subcategories. First, I will use *inductive category development* in order to choose the coding for my research. Then, I will apply to *deductive coding* in order to identify whether there is *consensus*, comparing the findings with the theoretical model presented in the theoretical framework of the current research. According to the Melanson’s model of consensus, it includes components which are the following: policy, cultural and procedural elements (Melanson, 2005: 9-12).

As it was mentioned above, before directly analyzing the text of the documents, especially party electoral programs and manifestos, it is important to determine the categories of analysis, i.e. key concepts (semantic units), available in the text and corresponding to the definitions and their empirical indicators, which are fixed in the research program. In the case of my research, such units are the following: category – foreign policy, subcategories:

1. NATO (defense, military bases, Iraq, Afganistan);
2. European Union (defense, economy, new members, cyber-threats, agriculture);
3. Russia (cyber-threats, military threat, tourism, economic cooperation).

As for the expert interviews, I will make a questionnaire that will help me to answer the research questions of the thesis and relevant interviewees’ answers will be presented in the research.

Then I will compare the content of these categories between parties in order to see whether there is consensus on these subcategories or not and finally I will compare the findings with the expert interviews. The choice of these categories for the current research can be explained by the fact that these categories were mentioned more often by the interviewees and these categories are highlighted in party manifestos and other foreign policy documents. As for the role

of parties in foreign policy making, this aspect will be analyzed through expert interviews and documents related to foreign policy.

The main advantages of content analysis are considered to be that, firstly, its technology does not distort the results of information processing through interaction with the public or subjective background of the study, and secondly, that this method gives an idea about the objects that the researcher does not directly observe (Borishpolets, 2005: 14). Besides, within the framework of QCA, data is to be analyzed step by step, following rules of procedure, devising the material into content analytical units, that helps to obtain the most reliable result (Mayring, 2000: 87).

### 3.3. Sources of Data Collection

In the thesis, I study Estonian foreign policy and focus on the role of political parties, and in particular foreign policy consensus (or lack thereof) among them. In order to study this, I analyze both documents and interviews. Documents consists of: 1) electoral programs and manifestos of political parties, 2) transcripts of the proceedings, 3) foreign policy documents, such as the Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbooks 4) mass media. The data are in Estonian, English, and Russian. The collection and choice of data will follow the criteria of relevance regarding the research questions.

#### 3.3.1. Interviews

As it was mentioned above, one of the data sources for the research are interviews. The researcher's choice of a particular type of interview is determined by the goals and objectives of the research. In this regard, there is a wide variety of interviewing techniques that fit into dozens of classifications built on various grounds, e.g. structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. When conducting a structured interview, the researcher has the opportunity to get surface opinions, while less structured types of interviews provide an opportunity to explore the underlying motives of actions and understand the opinions of interviewees (Chekhovski, 2009: 21). There is a great number of different interview forms, e.g. survey interview, Internet interview, telephone interview, or face-to-face interaction (Brinkmann, 2014: 1118).

In the thesis, the method of semi-structured in-depth interview was chosen. I have conducted five interviews with the experts in Estonian foreign policy and political parties. Taking into account that Estonia is a rather small country and there are not that many researchers focusing on Estonian foreign policy, it was rather difficult to find the interviewees. However, it should be

mentioned that it was quite easy to get the consent of experts to be interviewed. It was very pleasant for me that all the interviewees stressed that the topic of the research is relevant and very interesting to study. None of the possible interviewees refused to talk about the topic of the research. Moreover, several experts asked me to send them the final version of the Master's thesis.

I interviewed three Estonian researchers, one of them is Kristi Raik, Director of Foreign Policy Research Institute in Estonia, the other one is Viljar Veebel, consultant for Foreign Policy Research Institute in Estonia, who wrote texts for Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbooks. The third expert is Martin Mölder, researcher who has worked a lot with party manifestos. In addition to Estonian experts, I decided to interview also two Russian experts in the field of research. The reason for this was that the Master's thesis has been completed within the double degree program in international relations of the Finnish-Russian Cross-Border University, where the Russian university is my home one. The fourth interviewee is Vladislav Vorotnikov, Russian researcher who has specialized in the foreign policy of the Baltic States and their political systems. The fifth interviewee is Dmitri Lanko, Russian expert in Baltic politics, who has quite a big number of different articles on Estonian political parties and the evolution of Estonian political system. I suppose that all of them have good knowledge of political parties in Estonia and can give reliable information about the evolution of the perceptions on Estonian foreign policy.

The interviews lasted approximately from 40 to 60 minutes, as the semi-structured format was chosen, the questions for all the interviewees were almost the same. As about language, four interviews were conducted in English and one in Russian. All interviews were recorded and the interviewees gave their consent to this. Then audio data were transcribed and the final texts were agreed with the interviewees. Also, the interviewees approved using their names and positions in the thesis. Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 show the questions asked from the interviewees. It is important to mention that some questions may differ to the different experts because some interviewees did not have enough time to cover all the questions or some experts, on the contrary, gave extra information. Besides, the interviews had been taken from December, 2017 to February, 2019, so some questions were re-formulated after the first set of interviews. It is the reason why in Appendices I have the first set of questions as one Appendix, and the second set of questions as another Appendix (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). However, bearing in mind that I choose the semi-structured interview format there is no big problem with that.

Despite the fact that the number of interviews is limited, I think, their combination with data retrieved from party manifestos and electoral programs will provide enough data to answer the research questions of the thesis.

### *3.3.2. Party manifestos, other documents and media materials*

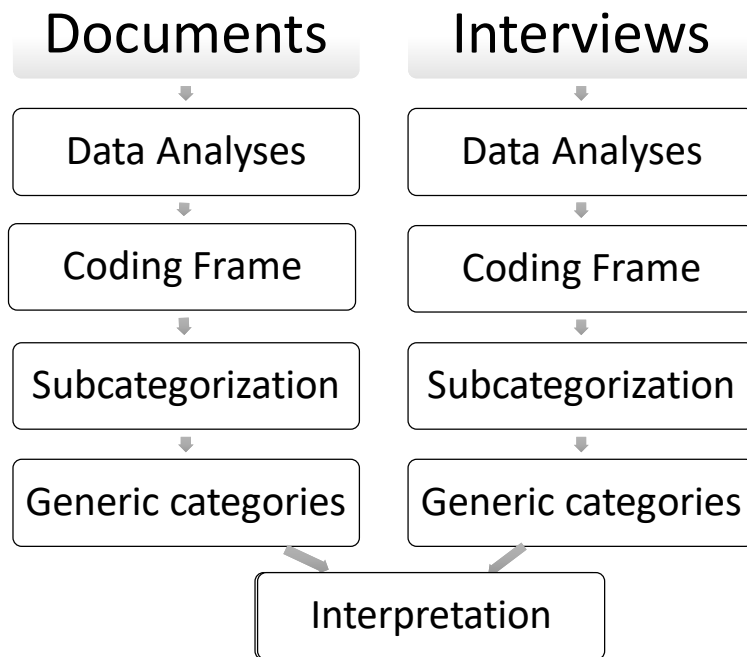
The second main source of data for the research is party manifestos and electoral programs. One of the most available tools for finding the manifestos of all political parties is the Manifesto Project Database, which is publicly available online. I gathered the manifestos and electoral programs of all parties represented in the Riigikogu from this database.

To answer the research questions of the thesis, much attention should be paid to the electoral programs of political parties, which were presented for the parliamentary elections in the Riigikogu in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019. All the manifestos and electoral programs of Estonian political parties are presented in the dataset, so the programs will be analyzed on the questions of foreign policy related to the research question, utilizing QCA.

In addition, I will study transcripts of the proceedings in the Riigikogu which refer to the discussions on the voting for the bills (treaty on NATO Accession, treaty on the Estonian-Russian border and Statement On the Future of the Institutions of the European Union) which I will analyze in the current research. I will analyze the voting results in accordance with the idea to find out how many parliamentarians were for the bill, how many against, and finally to conclude whether the bill was accepted by the majority or it had weak support. Besides, theme-based content-analysis was used for the media analysis, where themes were the main categories. This classification includes division on the following topics: treaty on NATO Accession, treaty on the Estonian-Russian border and Statement On the Future of the Institutions of the European Union. I have collected mass media materials in Estonian and Russian media: Delfi.ee, Postimees, ERR.ee, Regnum, Interfax. I have chosen these sources due to their circulation and popularity among society.

### *3.3.3. Analysis of the data*

The whole picture of the process which will be applied in this study is illustrated in Figure 1. As it was above-mentioned, the data for the research will be derived from different sources: data which is extracted from the interviews, and data which is extracted from documents. The process of data analysis will be the same in both cases. After a separate analysis of data, these generic categories will be benchmarked, and finally an interpretation of the data will be conducted.



**Figure 1. Methodological strategy for the research within content analysis**

#### **4. BACKGROUND: ESTONIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM AND FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION**

In dealing with the evolution of Estonian foreign policy and searching for consensus on foreign policy issues between the main political parties which were represented in the Riigikogu from 1999 to 2019, I have considered it worthwhile to start by introducing the Estonian political system and its foreign policy line during the last two decades. The reason of this choice is to show the mechanism of Parliament formation in Estonia and the procedure of the parliamentary elections, the role of political parties in foreign policy-making and voting process in the Riigikogu. This chapter is mainly based on the official documents and secondary sources.

##### **4.1. Political System in Estonia**

The Republic of Estonia declared the restoration of its independence in August 1991. Estonia is often seen as one of the strongest success stories among the former Soviet states (Lagerspetz & Vogt, 2013: 53). After regaining independence, the main choice for the Baltic countries has been between supranationalism and sovereignty (Veebel, 2014: 126). Before studying the main directions of Estonian foreign policy line since 1999, it seems to me that it is necessary to pay attention to domestic legitimization of foreign policy. The basic law, the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, was accepted in 1992, it has created a parliamentary and presidential republic, where the president is elected by the parliament of the country. "If the Parliament fails to elect a President, this authority is transferred to a special college comprising members of the Parliament and local municipalities" (Lanko, 2015: 69). The Cabinet consists of members of Parliament following parliamentary elections, which are held in a proportional system; the Prime Minister has broader powers in both foreign and domestic policy than the President (Ibid: 69).

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the president represents the Republic of Estonia in the international arena, in accordance with the Government Proposal, the president appoints and recalls diplomatic representatives; the government carries out foreign policy, signs international agreements and treaties; the single-chamber parliament of the country – the Riigikogu – ratifies and denounces international agreements and treaties (Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, 1992).

The legislative power is represented by the Riigikogu, which consists of 101 deputies (Loik & Veebel, 2011: 3). As for the legislation process, it is based on simple majority voting in the Riigikogu after three readings (see Figure 2 below). In accordance with the Riigikogu Rules of



Procedure and Internal Rules Act, supported legislative acts are presented to the President of the Republic for proclamation, who may use the right of veto if needed and return the draft of the law to the Riigikogu. If the Parliament does not amend the draft of the legislative act, the President also has the right to propose to the Supreme Court to declare the indicated law unconstitutional (Loik & Veebel, 2011: 3-4). This system of adoption the legislative acts should guarantee the balance of powers, as well as control the coherence of supported acts with the Constitution of the Republic (Ibid: 4). The Riigikogu elections are universal, uniform and direct and they are conducted every four years. In 2007, Estonia became the first country which introduced electronic voting for the parliamentary elections in parallel to traditional voting, this form of voting is becoming more popular from year to year (Ibid). In order to vote in general elections, a person should be a citizen of the Republic of Estonia and have achieved the age of 18 years (Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, 1992: Article 57).

Briefly stated, “the Riigikogu is elected based on the principle of proportionality with a 5% national threshold. However, because citizens' votes are actually cast for individual candidates, the first and second ‘tiers’ of mandate distribution go as ‘direct mandates’ to individual candidates who have received a minimum quota of personal votes in their particular electoral districts. Only after this are all the candidates' votes aggregated nationally by party, with any remaining mandates distributed via proportional representation and national party lists. This system means that it is possible for independent candidates (i.e. those who are not affiliated with any national list) to run” (Pettai & Toomla, 2003: 10). “Parties have tended to form opportunistic alliances to overcome the threshold and then to split into separate parliamentary factions immediately after the election, often combining with the same or other allies at the subsequent election” (Fitzmaurice, 2001: 142).

The proportional electoral system created in the early 1990s which has undergone only minor changes since then, has defined the most important feature of the party political system of the country: there is a multiparty system, and no party dominates in the Riigikogu even in the short run (Lanko, 2015: 68).

Under the Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act, there are 11 permanent committees in the Riigikogu. Taking into account the research interest of the Master’s thesis, the attention should be paid to the committee related to foreign policy issues. The Foreign Affairs Committee and the delegations of the Riigikogu are among the main actors which manage foreign relations of the Riigikogu. The President of the Riigikogu, other committees and factions, as well as individual members of the Riigikogu, for example through the parliamentary groups, also deal with foreign relations (The Riigikogu webpage).

According to Foreign Relations Act, the competences of the Riigikogu in the field of foreign policy are the following:

(1) “The Riigikogu shall:

- 1) pass Acts and resolutions relating to foreign relations;
- 2) ratify treaties by passing Acts concerning accession, approval, acceptance, ratification or other Acts, and denounce ratified treaties by passing Acts concerning the denunciation of, withdrawal from or termination of the agreement or other Acts;
- 3) present statements, declarations and communications concerning foreign policy or accede thereto;
- 4) conduct relations with the parliaments of other states and with interparliamentary organisations, and form foreign delegations;
- 5) discuss, on the basis of a report from the Government of the Republic, the foreign policy of the state and the implementation thereof during the second plenary working cycle of the year.

(2) The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu shall:

- 1) regularly discuss the foreign policy;
- 2) coordinate the foreign relations of the Riigikogu;
- 3) discuss the report from the Government of the Republic on the foreign policy of the state and present its report at the corresponding plenary sitting of the Riigikogu;
- 4) discuss the bases of security policy and the principles of development co-operation and humanitarian aid presented by the Government of the Republic;
- 5) hear the information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the candidates for the posts of ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary and envoys of the Republic of Estonia and meet the candidate, if necessary” (Foreign Relations Act, 2007, Article 6).

So, the main tasks of the Riigikogu can be summarized the following way: “1) law-making and assessing the quality and effects of draft legislation; 2) representing the voters and the Parliament and the respective political parties in domestic and foreign policy debates; 3) monitoring the activities of the executive power and the use of the state budget for the conformity with law; 4) political dialogue, providing advice and decisions for the government; 5) informing the public about the objectives, reasons and possible effects of laws, as well as involving representatives of interested groups in law drafting; 6) alleviating conflicts of social interests through political means” (Kasemets, 2000). Thus, the three most important tasks of the Riigikogu are to pass laws and regulations, carry out parliamentary control and develop international relations.

#### 4.2. Estonian Foreign Policy Line, 1999-2019

After Estonia regained the independence in 1991, its foreign policy as well as the foreign policy of other Baltic States, has been oriented towards the West, with the aim of receiving security guarantees from NATO and EU membership against the possible threat from the neighboring Russia (Vilson, 2015: 56; Raik, 2003: 163; Mälksoo, 2006: 277). Estonians considered that the EU is a good option, despite the fact that both the political and public opinion believed that NATO is the only option that can safeguard Estonia's security. However, during the 1990s NATO membership did not seem to be realized in the near future, whereas the EU membership seemed more probable (Raik, 2003: 163). The EU is seen as an altruistic or friendly actor by the Estonian public and elite (Veebel and Loik, 2012: 163-164).

After joining both the EU and NATO in 2004, Estonia demonstrated a strong desire of deep integration in these platforms and its policies in the EU could be characterized by a great degree of pragmatism and the need to join all possible clubs, above all the Schengen Agreement and the Monetary Union (Lagerspetz & Vogt, 2013: 55). Political changes in Estonia happened between 2004 and 2010, they were the result of EU membership (Laar, 2002: 360). The matter is that after accession of the EU, Estonia had to share its sovereignty with EU institutions. Thus, political and administrative changes in the mid-1990s were accepted in exchange for much-sought economic growth and additional security, as there was societal agreement on the benefits of the EU membership (Veebel and Loik, 2012: 164).

In 2010, the main aims of the Estonian foreign policy concerning the integration in the EU and NATO were achieved and there was a need for a new discourse which would answer both internal and external political priorities (Astrov, 2009: 119). This discourse was found in the question of recognition of the crimes of communism in the post-Soviet states which should be the most important task of post-Communist societies (Ibid, 117). The proposal to organize an International Court to investigate the "crimes of communism" was made at the international conference held in Tallinn in 2015 (Delfi.ee 23.08.2015., Postimees 22.08.2015). Later, in 2014 after the events in Crimea, much attention has been paid to the Eastern neighbor and situation in the Baltic Sea Region. Andreas Kasekamp states that "the evidence of increasing military activity in the Baltic Sea region as a spillover from the Ukrainian crisis is abundant" (Kasekamp, 2015: 1). Besides, there were some worries about "Russian air force planes that have been flying dangerously with transponders switched off, hence, air policing mission and troop deployment for exercises were increased to reassure the Baltic states and deter Russia" (Ibid, 2).

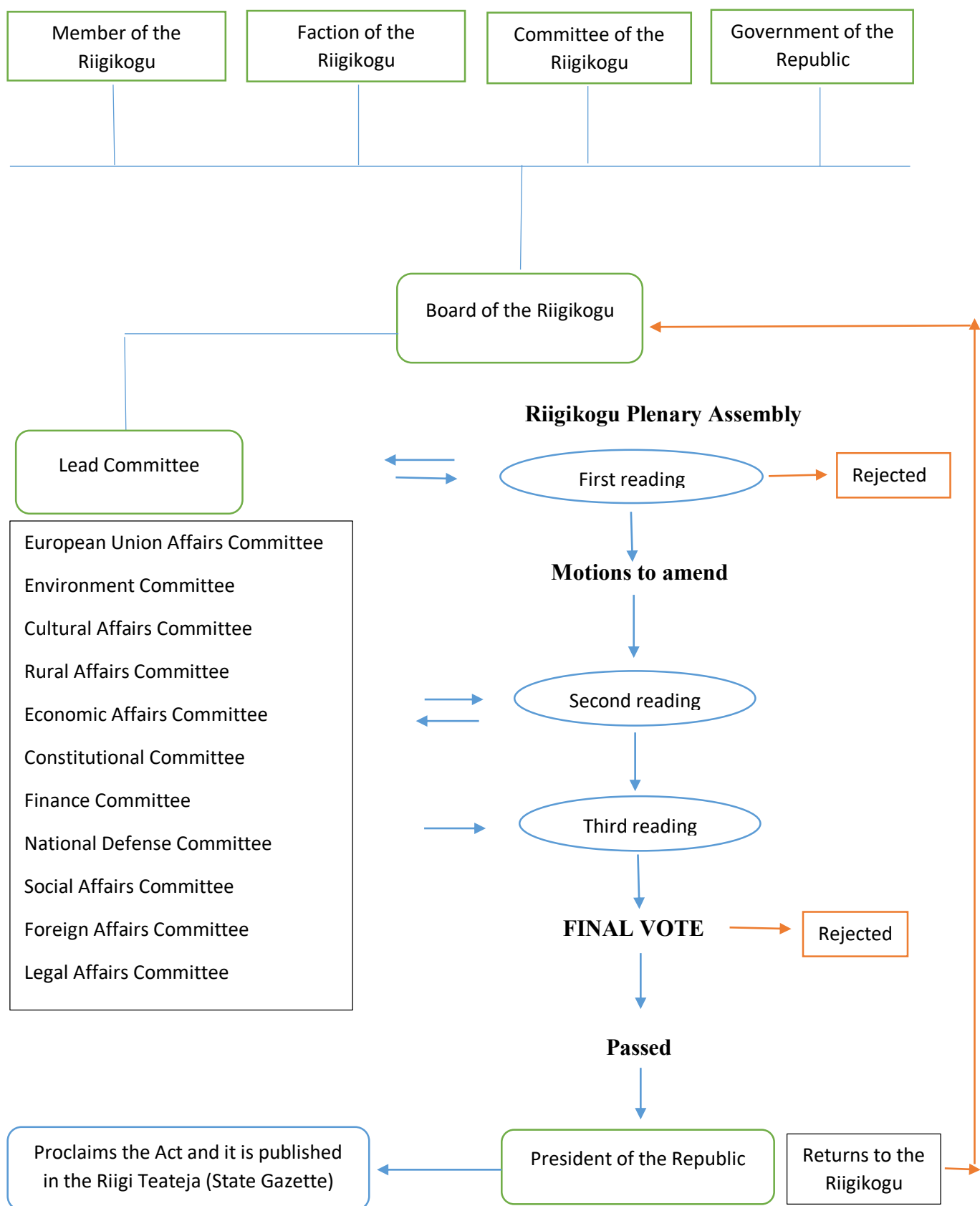
The migration crisis and the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration are one more of the foreign policy issues of Estonia. According to the information on Estonia's government

webpage, Estonia is participating in resolving the crisis voluntarily and in proportion to its weight within the European Union (Estonia's government webpage). As for the Global Compact on Migration, there were some debates in the Government, there was no consensus about signing the Pact, therefore, the Pact was considered in the Riigikogu, which by a simple majority supported the approval of the Pact (ERR.ee, 10.11.2018). So, we can see that the foreign policy line of Estonia on further integration into the international organizations and mechanisms are still on the agenda.

Defining the main directions of Estonian foreign policy, it is interesting to note that some researchers can clearly identify its directions, while some of them suggest that it is difficult to do so. For example, Vorotnikov (2015) argues that Estonia has been active in its foreign policy in three directions:

- 1) Euro-Atlantic direction (to strengthen integration processes with the EU and NATO; at the bilateral level – strategic partnership with the USA and countries of the Baltic region);
- 2) Regional direction (subregional Baltic integration and strengthening of cooperation with all countries of the region in multilateral formats (The Baltic assembly, The Council of the Baltic Sea States, forum of the Baltic development and Nordic Council);
- 3) Eastern direction (relations with Russia and other post-Soviet countries) the relations with Russia are considered in the context of dialogue Russia – NATO, Russia – the EU and regional cooperation (Vorotnikov, 2015: 30).

Thus, we can see that the political course of Estonia over the past two decades has been virtually uni-linear, almost monotonic, it seems to be widely accepted by a majority of political parties and voters (Lagerspetz & Vogt, 2013: 66). It has been argued that despite certain divergences in methods of conducting foreign policy, none of the parties presented in the Riigikogu calls into question the basis of the strategic course of Estonia (Vorotnikov, 2015: 165). In my thesis I study whether this statement is still valid in Estonian foreign policy. Firstly, I will consider the main emphases on foreign policy issues via electoral programs. Then I will present experts' point of view regarding these questions, and finally, I will look at ratification of some bills in the Riigikogu.



**FIGURE 2. Diagram of proceedings on a bill (Chancellery of the Riigikogu, 2015)**

## 5. ANALYSIS: FOREIGN POLICY CONSENSUS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

In this chapter, I present the results of my research. First, I describe results of my study from the public data collected such as party programs and manifestos which demonstrate parties' positions towards foreign policy line of Estonia. Next, I look at the ratification process of one of the main Estonian foreign policy documents from 1999 to 2019 in order to find out whether the second element of consensus theory (procedural consensus) is applicable to the case of Estonia. Then, I analyze interviews, conducted by me, with the experts in Estonian politics. Finally, in the discussion section I compare the findings from party electoral programs, manifestos, interviews and the process of ratification, and refer to the previous studies in the field.

### 5.1. Party Electoral Programs/Manifestos

In order to understand the position of political parties towards foreign policy line of the country, I analyze party manifestos for the Riigikogu elections in the current sub-chapter. The process of analyzation is conducted under the coding frames which are presented in the Methods Chapter of the Master's thesis. The results of analyzation are set out in the chronological order for better demonstration the evolution of the parties' positions on the issues of foreign policy.

#### 5.1.1. *Riigikogu IX Elections, 1999*

Seven political parties were represented in the 9<sup>th</sup> Riigikogu: the Estonian Centre Party, the Pro Patria Union, the Estonian Reform Party, political party "The Moderates", the Estonian Coalition Party, the Estonian Country People's Party and the United People's Party of Estonia (Riigikogu webpage). According to the Centre Party's electoral program, the Centre Party is very cautious about NATO membership, attaches higher priority to improving relations with Russia. Although they support EU membership, they pay attention to the fact that it is good to see the pros and cons of its membership (Eesti Keskerakonna valimisplatvorm, 1999: 7-8).

The Reform Party stands for the continuation of the EU and NATO accession process. During this process, Estonia should follow its interests and make informed decisions (Reformierakonna valimisplatvorm, 1999: 4-5). Relations with Russia is not outlined in the electoral program.

Moderates are located on the left side of the political dimension. They seem to be a modern social democratic party, which states for EU and NATO membership and support social market economic policies (Rahvaerakonna Mõõdukad valimisplatvorm, 1999).

Pro Patria supports the foreign policy course of Estonia for the integration into the EU and NATO. Besides, Pro Patria mentions that Estonia's citizens should decide themselves to integrate into these structures or not (Isamaaliidu valimisprogramm, 1999: 2).

According to the electoral program of the Coalition Party, they stand for the further integration process into the EU and NATO. Also, they outline that the decision about accession should be taken by Estonian citizens. The Coalition Party supports the establishment of normal relations with Russia. In order to do so, Estonian-Russian intergovernmental commission should continue its work for the preparation of the border Treaty (Koonderakonna valimisplatvorm, 1999: 5).

The Estonian Country People's Party, as the majority of Estonian parties, stands for the integration into EU and NATO, the decision should be taken via referendum. Besides, the Party pays attention to the fact that economic interests of Estonia should be taken into account in its foreign policy initiatives. Also, Estonia should maintain good relations with its neighbors, e.g. Russia (Maarahva erakonna valimisplatvorm, 1999: 4).

The smallest party represented in the Riigikogu is the United People's Party of Estonia (UPPE). It stands for the referendum on the accession to the EU and NATO. The referendum should be preceded by a discussion on the competitive goals that Estonia pursues by joining the EU. The Party states that Estonia's accession to NATO not only does not solve the country's security problem, but also poses a threat of increased danger as a result of a possible confrontation between NATO and Russia. It concludes that the policy of neutrality, traditional for the European North, is better for Estonia (Eesti Ühendatud Rahvapartei valimisplatvorm, 1999: 8)

Thus, we can see that the majority of political parties represented in the Riigikogu, support the EU and NATO accession. While the Centre Party and the United People's Party of Estonia are cautious about NATO membership because it can undermine the relations with Russia. Almost all parties, except the Reform Party, stand for maintaining good relations with Russia in their electoral programs.

### *5.1.2. Riigikogu X Elections, 2003*

The 10th Riigikogu consisted of six political parties: The Estonian Centre Party, the Union for the Republic – Res Publica, the Estonian Reform Party, the Estonian People's Union, Pro Patria Union and the Moderates (Riigikogu webpage).

According to the electoral program of the Reform party, Estonia has almost achieved one of the main goals of its foreign policy – accession to the EU and NATO. They consider that it is important that the whole accession process should be in a publicly observable and

understandable manner for the citizens. When joining the European Union, Estonia's national interests, especially culture, and independent tax and social policies are being pursued. Besides, the Reform Party outlines that Estonia's national defense should become a major contributor to the development of cooperation with NATO. Estonia should increase the role of professional military personnel in the Defense Forces and continue its accession to NATO structures (Reformierakonna valimisplatvorm, 2003: 9-10).

The Centre Party mentions that these years were very important because it was a final step of NATO and EU accession. Estonia should pursue an active policy in different spheres: economy, defense, environment, etc. Moreover, Estonia should maintain economic and political relations with Russia. Besides, the Centre Party stands for the Estonian participation in the development of NATO and the European Union Rapid Response Force. Also they support the idea of active participation of Estonia in different peace operations and crisis-management operations conducted by the United Nations, the EU and NATO (Eesti Keskerakonna valimisplatvorm, 2003: 10-11).

It is interesting to note that the electoral program of the Union for the Republic does not cover the issues of foreign policy at all (Res Publica 2003. a. Riigikogu valimisplatvorm, 2003).

The Estonian People's Union Party stands for the accession to the European Union, but the conditions for accession must comply fully with the independent Estonian national interests. They stand for the application to the EU to compensate for the losses caused to Estonian agriculture and rural life through aid programs due to unprofitable trade and to take into account unfair trade resulting from the impact of the agricultural production quota allocation. Besides, the Party stands firmly against Brussels' bureaucratic demands, which are contrary to Estonia's sovereign (Rahvaliidu valimisplatvorm, 2003: 11-12).

According to the program of Pro Patria Union, the accession to the EU and NATO give a lot of new opportunities and balance Estonia's development. They think that Estonia must not disappear or drown in Europe. The main aim of Estonia is to maintain its language, culture and an ability to make decisions independently. Besides, Estonia should be an equal, strong, initiative-driven and critical partner within the EU (Isamaaliidu valimisprogramm, 2003: 12).

Along with the previous parties, the Moderates stand for the accession to the EU and NATO. They consider that it is necessary for Estonia, as a small country, to be active in the European Union and NATO and to be open to any cooperation. They support cooperation between the Baltic states, development and implementation of the Northern dimension of the European Union and closer cooperation with the North-West of Russia. Besides, they suggest the development of Estonian defense capabilities by allocating 2% of GDP per year and pay special



attention to strengthening the quality of the Defense Forces (Rahvaerakonna Mõõdukad valimisplatvorm, 2003: 6).

To sum up, I can conclude that all parties which are presented in the Riigikogu stand for the accession to the EU and NATO structures. Many parties stress that the accession should take place according to the national interests of Estonia, where the main one is to protect the security of the country and to improve the economic position on the international markets. Comparing to the previous Riigikogu electoral programs, during the current elections, parties pay less attention to the relations with Russia, whilst much attention is paid to Estonia's participation in different fields of EU policies.

#### *5.1.3. Riigikogu XI Elections, 2007*

Riigikogu's members represented six political parties: the Estonian Reform Party, the Estonian Centre Party, the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, the Social Democratic Party (former the Moderates), the Estonian Green Party and the Estonian People's Union (Riigikogu webpage).

In accordance with the electoral program of the Centre Party, the main goals of Estonian foreign policy are to maintain independence of Estonia, its territorial integrity and constitutional order. Estonia should pursue a policy of cooperation with EU and other states. Also, there is a need to develop both independent defense capabilities and international defense cooperation. Besides, they outline the necessity to participate in international military missions which are not directly under Estonia's obligations in the EU or NATO but under the UN mandate. The Centre Party supports close cooperation between the European Union and NATO with regard to external and internal defense as well as supports Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU (Eesti Keskerakonna valimisplatvorm, 2007: 12).

The Reform Party outlines that EU membership is an important guarantee of the well-being and security of Estonia. Within the EU, tax and social policy should be remained at the national level. Besides, there is a need to increase the role of national parliaments in the EU legislation. Estonia should contribute to the development of a common energy policy and Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU. Also, Estonia should be a designer of EU-Russia relations, where EU-Russia relations should be based on the values of democracy. The Reform Party supports the development of economic, transport, environment and cultural projects with Russia. Moreover, Estonia attaches great importance to strong transatlantic links, and EU-NATO cooperation. As for the possible EU enlargement, the Reforms outline that the EU does not have to be afraid to be bigger, that is why the efforts of the Western Balkans' accession to the EU should

be supported. The Reform Party considers that NATO membership guarantees Estonia's military defense, they support Estonia's participation in NATO-led international peace-keeping operations. They stress that Estonia should contribute to the NATO budget at least 2% of GDP per year (Reformierakonna valimisplatvorm, 2007: 29-31).

According to the program of the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, Estonia's EU and NATO membership are in the interests of Estonia. Besides, they stand for EU enlargement and active position of Estonia in these structures. As for relations with Russia, they want to help Russia to get rid of its historical expansionist ideas and to change the image of Russia (Isamaa ja Res Publica Liidu valimisprogramm, 2007).

The Social Democratic Party states that they will make Estonia an effective "new member" in the EU and NATO. They actively support the further enlargement of the EU: integration of Croatia, Turkey, Albania, and Macedonia. The Social Democrats are ready to be involved in seeking solutions to the frozen conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia. Besides, they outline their readiness to develop constructive relations with Russia and to enter into force the Agreement on the Estonian-Russian border. As for NATO, the Social Democratic Party are opposed to duplicating military capabilities, including military planning capabilities of NATO and the EU. They want to continue to engage in international military cooperation, both with the UN, NATO and NATO peace and security operations (Sotsiaaldemokraatliku Erakonna programm 2007. aasta Riigikogu valimisel, 2007: 28-29).

The Estonian Greens does not pay much attention to foreign policy issues. There is only mention of the fact that Estonia's foreign economic policy should support the access of Estonian enterprises to foreign markets (Eestimaa Rohelised valimisplatvorm, 2007).

The Estonian People's Union stands for the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the European Union's common foreign and security policy. Nevertheless, they pay attention to the fact that the EU is a community of sovereign states, where states should respect linguistic and cultural diversity of the member states. As for relations with Russia, they consider that it is necessary to take steps to normalize bilateral economic relations with Russia and to achieve the entry into force of the border agreement (ERL valimisplatvorm 2007.aasta Riigikogu valimistel, 2007: 3).

So, we can see the tendency of supporting Estonia's EU and NATO membership among political parties and the desire of all parties to continue further integration into EU structures. Political parties do not change their main foreign policy emphases.

#### *5.1.4. Riigikogu XII Elections, 2011*

The 12<sup>th</sup> Riigikogu consisted of four political parties: the Estonian Reform Party, the Estonian Centre Party, the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union and the Social Democratic Party (Riigikogu webpage).

The Estonian Reform Party mentions that Estonia continues its integration into EU structures. The Reform Party stands for the implementation of NATO's strategic concept, where Estonia should contribute a lot. Besides, they suggest that in order to complete the mission in Afghanistan, it is necessary to cooperate within NATO. The Reform Party supports the accession of the Balkans, Iceland and Turkey to the EU. Along with the maintaining partner relations with NATO and the EU, it is necessary to Estonia to maintain good relations with Russia as well. As for NATO, the Reform Party supposes the necessity of contributing to the NATO budget at least 2% of GDP per year. They support NATO's cyber defense and stand for the increasing cyber security defense training (Reformierakonna valimisplattvorm, 2011).

According to the manifesto of the Centre Party, Estonian foreign policy should follow economic interests of Estonia. The Centre Party supports the EU's cooperation with its eastern neighbors and negotiations on visa liberalization. Moreover, they consider that it is important to renegotiate the agreement on the Estonian-Russian border. As the Reform Party, the Centre party supports Estonian defense spending to the NATO's budget 2% of GDP per year. Estonia should make a reasonable contribution to NATO military operations and collective defense (Eesti Keskerakonna Valimisplattvorm Riigikogu XII Koosseisu Valimistel, 2011).

Social Democrats stand for the development of productive relations with Russia and for taking steps in Estonian-Russian border agreement. They appreciate the EU enlargement and ready to help Croatia, Turkey, Albania, and Macedonia with their integration into the EU. Besides, Social Democrats support Estonia's involvement in finding solutions for the EU frozen conflicts (Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia). They stand for the facilitation border crossing between the EU and Russia and they support the EU-Russia visa waiver agreement. Regarding defense, the Social Democratic party opposes military planning capabilities duplication in NATO and the EU. They stand for active participation in NATO Rapid Reaction Force and Europe Rapid Response Unit. Moreover, they support Estonia's participation in international military cooperation within the UN, NATO, EU and international peace operations (Sotsiaaldemokraatliku Erakonna programm 2011. aasta Riigikogu valimistel, 2011: 30-32).

In accordance with the manifesto of the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, Estonia's national interest includes an effectively NATO functioning which can protect common interest of the member states. Besides, Pro Patria supports concrete and practical initiatives in Estonian-

Russian relations. The party stands for the contribution to NATO budget at least 2% of GDP, and they are going to maintain this level of spending. Pro Patria pays attention to the cyber defense activities and international cooperation (Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit 2011. a. Riigikogu valimisplatvorm, 2011).

Comparing the positions of political parties on the issues of foreign policy, I can assume that all parties stand for the maintaining good relations with Russia, two parties (the Centre Party and the Social Democratic Party) stress the need to renegotiate the agreement on the Estonian-Russian border which was discussed by foreign ministers of two countries in 2007. Social Democrats emphasize the need to support the EU-Russia visa waiver agreement. The Reform Party, the Centre party and the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union support Estonian defense spending to the NATO's budget 2% of GDP per year. Besides, all parties pay attention to the activity of Estonia in international military operations and the questions of cyber defense.

#### *5.1.5. Riigikogu XIII Elections, 2015*

Six political parties were represented in the 13<sup>th</sup> Riigikogu: the Reform party, the Centre Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, the Estonian Free Party and the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE).

Before analyzing the text of party manifestos and electoral programs, it is interesting to note that all parties presented quite long manifestos comparing with their previous ones, especially the manifestos presented for the parliamentary elections in 1999. For example, in 1999 the Reform Party presented the manifesto of 5 pages while in 2015 their manifesto contains 95 pages; the Centre Party's manifesto in 1999 consisted of 8 pages, while in 2015 it contains 37 pages. I suppose that it can be explained by the fact that modern party programs for the Riigikogu elections include more detailed information about their plans for the future of Estonian foreign policy.

The Reform Party considers that it is important to keep NATO's collective defense plans up to date and it is necessary to keep force contingent in Estonia. Moreover, the Reform Party supports a creation of NATO Response Force Unit and participation of Estonia in the formation of Joint Expeditionary Force. Besides, they outline the Estonian contribution to NATO's cyber defense. They stand for the active participation of Estonia in the military missions of NATO, the EU, the UN and allied coalitions. They emphasize the need to increase the defense budgets of all NATO members at least 2% of GDP per year. It is interesting to note that the Reforms for the first time mention a close partnership between the European Union and NATO. They continue supporting the EU enlargement, including the accession of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to the

EU. Besides, they stand for the disconnection of Estonian electricity system from Russia by 2025 (Reformierakonna valimisprogramm, 2015: 6-19).

According to the Centre Party's electoral program, they stand for the contribution to NATO's budget at least 2% of GDP per year. Also, they support active participation of Estonia in different operations within NATO and the EU. The Centre Party believe that a speedy and peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian crisis and the participation of experts from Estonia in all missions of the European Union is a very important task. As the Reform party, the Centre Party supports the accession of Georgia and Moldova to the EU (Eesti Keskerakonna valimisplatvorm, 2015: 36-37).

Social Democrats as both the Reform Party and the Centre Party stand for the contribution to NATO's budget at least 2% of GDP per year. Social Democrats emphasize the importance of NATO rotational units in Estonia. Also they stress that Estonian defense forces should participate in the international military operations conducted by NATO, the EU and the UN. Besides, Estonia should closer cooperate with NATO and EU member states. As for Russia, the Social Democratic Party supports Russia's democratic forces, propose to develop economic relations and cultural cooperation with Russia (Sotsiaaldemokraatliku Erakonna programm 2015. aasta Riigikogu valimisteks, 2015: 40-43).

The Pro Patria and Res Publica Union emphasizes that world politics has changed after the events in Ukraine. It correlates with Estonia's national interests to have an effective policy within the European Union and NATO. The Pro Patria and Res Publica Union stand for the permanent presence of Allied forces in Estonia. They propose to achieve the status of NATO's permanent rotation base for air security, because Estonia, as a border country of NATO, is located not far from Russia which acted aggressively in Ukraine. They stated several times in the manifesto that the situation has changed, it means that there is a need to contribute more to the protection of Estonia. Estonia must contribute 2% of GDP to national defense and be prepared to contribute more if necessary. Regarding Russia, the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union emphasizes that the aggressive action of the Russian Federation is the biggest threat to Estonia. They suppose that this threat may be manifested in a bilateral conflict where Russia is attempting to use military force or in a broader military crisis in the region. Also they raise the question of the awareness and condemning the crimes of communism and Nazism. Within the EU, Estonia should participate more verbally in European debates, especially in areas that are strong for Estonia, such as finance or digital development. The Pro Patria and Res Publica Union considers that it is necessary to establish specific programs for supporting Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic structures (Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit 2015. a. Riigikogu valimisplatvorm, 2015: 69-72).

The Estonian Free Party proposes to increase NATO's presence in Estonia and to increase defense spending up to 3% of GDP. Besides, the Free Party stands for the increase in funding for the Estonian Defence League and its specialized organizations. The relations with Russia and with the EU are not covered in the manifesto (*Eesti Vabaerakonna valimisplatvorm 2015 (lühiversioon)*, 2015: 1).

According to the manifesto of EKRE, they stand for the full solidarity from all European countries in ensuring the national security of each member state. EKRE propose to have independent arms and weapons because it seems to them unacceptable to have French arms in Estonia whilst France can use these weapons against the Baltic States. Besides, EKRE are categorically opposed to visa liberalization with Russia because it can breed a massive Slavic migration wave, which leads Estonia back to 1986. As for the EU membership, EKRE seem that Estonia should take a new stand in the relations with Russia and actively and vigorously explain its concerns to EU partners (*Eesti Konservatiivse Rahvaerakonna valimisplatvorm*, 2015).

Based on analysis of programs of political parties for the Parliamentary elections which were held in 2015, I may argue that there is a course towards harmonization of the relations with the western allies, active participation in the EU and NATO's activities, increasing in contributions to NATO at the level of 2% of GDP, recognition of territorial integrity of Ukraine, creation of energy links for energy independence from Russia. It is important to note that the Social Democratic party is the only party which mentions a need to develop normal economic and cultural relations with Russia (*Program of the Social Democratic Party for the Riigikogu elections*, 2015: 42).

#### *5.1.6. Riigikogu XIV Elections, 2019*

In this section I will briefly present the main expectations of the political course after the elections in 2019.

According to the results of the elections which were held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 2019, five political parties are represented in the Riigikogu: the Reform Party, the Centre Party, EKRE, the Social Democratic Party and Pro Partia.

It seems less probable that something will radically change in foreign policy of Estonia. Remaining in the EU, Estonia will continue to focus on the relations with the US, its main ally. As for the relations with Russia they are unlikely to improve until Russia begins to comply with the international law. None of the parties supports the lifting of sanctions, although they are talking about maintaining cooperation with Russia in the field of culture. However, there is still considerable disagreement on the ratification of the Estonian-Russian border agreement. EKRE

want to demand the return of the Pechora region, which according to the Tartu peace treaty belonged to Estonia until 1940. EKRE are strongly against joining the migration Pact (Eesti Konservatiivse Rahvaerakonna programm 2019. aasta Riigikogu valimisteks). As for the questions of defense, main parties have reached consensus on them. It is necessary for Estonia to cooperate with NATO, to build the Eastern border, to maintain spending at 2% of GDP. The differences are only in the details. For example, EKRE want to ask for military assistance from the US in the amount of 1 billion euros (Eesti Konservatiivse Rahvaerakonna programm 2019. aasta Riigikogu valimisteks). The Reform Party stands for the idea of an independent army, that the use of armed forces is a sovereign right of the state (Eesti Reformierakonna valimisplatvorm 2019. aasta Riigikogu valimisteks: 33-34). EKRE is against the idea of a European army, they see NATO as a security guarantor (Eesti Konservatiivse Rahvaerakonna programm 2019. aasta Riigikogu valimisteks).

The Reform Party states for the close cooperation with the EU and NATO. Maintaining good economic and security relations with allies in Europe and North America is very important for Estonia. Along with to maintain stable relations with Russia (Eesti Reformierakonna valimisplatvorm 2019. aasta Riigikogu valimisteks: 33-34).

Summarizing the comparison of the electoral programs and manifestos of political parties from 1999 to 2019, I can make several conclusions. Firstly, after analyzing party electoral programs, I may argue that most part of political parties has the same emphases on foreign policy issues, where the main one is EU and NATO membership and further integration in these structures. There are few issues on which parties have slightly opposite points of views, one of them is the relations with Russia. According to the party electoral programs, all parties stand for maintaining good relations with Russia, nevertheless, there is some different point of views towards the agreement on Estonian-Russian border. EKRE argue for the ratification of the agreement that is based on the Treaty of Tartu, whilst other parties do not strictly allocate to this treaty. Secondly, we can see the continuity of foreign policy course, the main emphases of Estonia's foreign policy have not changed for twenty years. It can be a signal that Estonian political system is quite stable: diametrically opposed party positions on the main foreign policy issues are less possible. The last can be explained by the fact that, as it was mentioned in the Theoretical Framework Chapter, the Estonian Cabinet formed by the representatives of the ruling parties which conclude a coalition agreement. Finally, electoral programs and manifestos have become longer than they were in 1999. It may indicate that they cover more issues and present more detailed positions towards foreign policy course.

## 5.2. Interviews

The following section presents an overview of the topics mentioned in the interviews. The findings are presented in accordance with the coding frame elaborated within the QCA model in the thesis.

### *5.2.1. Foreign policy decision-making in Estonia*

The following dimension covers a process of foreign policy decision-making in Estonia, the role of concrete person/group of persons and public opinion in this mechanism. I start from the exploration of the foreign policy creation in Estonia. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, Estonia is a parliamentary democracy, so political parties are expected to play a great role in foreign policy-making. Dmitri Lanko, professor at the St. Petersburg University, expert in Estonian political parties, during the interview explained that “Estonian foreign policymaking is about the interplay between the parliament, Riigikogu, first of all, the opposition, and the Cabinet, which consists of representatives of the ruling parties” (Lanko, 2019). Vladislav Vorotnikov, professor at Moscow State Institute of International Relations, expert in foreign policy of the Baltic states, added that both internal and external factors influence the foreign policy decision-making (Vorotnikov, 2018). Two interviewees mentioned that the key factor in the case of Estonia is the role of historical memories which dominant on the country’s foreign policy since 1991 (Lanko, 2019; Vorotnikov, 2018).

As for the role of public opinion, Lanko stated that “public opinion does not play an important role in the process”. He gave an example, that “one-third of Estonian voters voted against membership in the European Union in 2003. At the same time, none of the political parties present in the Riigikogu at that time even attempted to use Eurosceptic views of the third of the voters in order to gain more votes” (Lanko, 2019). Kristi Raik, Director of the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute, said that “public opinion is not particularly interested in foreign policy. It supports basic issues such as EU and NATO membership” (Raik, 2019). Martin Mölder, researcher at the University of Tartu, shared the view that everybody supports EU membership. “Everybody thinks that Estonia benefits from its membership. Probably, nobody or very few people would say that Estonia should step out of the EU, maybe there are some disagreements whether the EU should stay as it is or should integrate further”. Mölder highlighted that public opinion is a very tricky thing because people can be asked about things which do not exist at all, and they still will give an answer (Mölder, 2018).



It is interesting to note, that talking about public opinion in Estonia, is very important to take into account a divided society of the country. Three interviewees mentioned a very clear ethnic division, especially on the issues related to Russia (Raik, 2019; Lanko, 2019; Mölder, 2018). Mölder stated that “Estonians in Estonia rather perceive Russia as a threat while Estonian Russians do not really perceive it so much” (Mölder, 2018). Lanko paid attention to the fact that public opinion is not heard during the annual “debate” on foreign policy in the Riigikogu, e.g. “some EU policies are not widely supported in Estonia: residents of rural areas predominantly dislike the Common Agricultural Policy, some businesspeople are unhappy about the Competition Policy, many conservative-leaning people openly criticize the emergent Migration Policy” (Lanko, 2019).

Based on the interviewees’ opinions, I may argue that public opinion does not influence foreign policy decision-making in Estonia. So, it means that foreign policy decisions are taken by political elites, where the latest maybe an indicator of foreign-policy consensus, according to the consensus’s theory of Richard Melanson. Nevertheless, in order to understand the role of political elites in decision-making, it is necessary to find out who is the main person in this process. That is why the next issue is referred to the question who is a leader of Estonian foreign policy.

Answering the question about the leader of Estonian foreign policy almost all the interviewees noted that it is both very curious and difficult question. The answers were not as precise as expected and gave a mixed picture. Lanko said that the leaders of Estonian foreign policy are the persons who make it. So, he identified the following names: Keit Pentus-Rosimannus (Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2014-2015), Mart Helme (Chairman of the Conservative People’s Party of Estonia, former Estonia’s ambassador to Russia, 1995-1999), Sven Mikser (Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2016-present, Member of the Social Democratic party), Marko Mihkelson (Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu, Member of the Reform party), Urmas Paet (Member of the European Parliament from Estonia, Member of the Reform party) (Lanko, 2019). Viljar Veebel, the consultant in the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute, considered that in terms of being more visible as a leader of foreign policy is Jüri Luik (Minister of Defense 2016-present, Member of the Pro Patria). Veebel explained that as a former diplomat he usually expressed his thoughts firmly and that made him an idol for locals (Veebel, 2017). Mölder answered the question a little bit differently, during his answer he paid attention to the political system of Estonia. He stressed that the government makes decisions based on consensus. So, parties which are in the coalition whatever they agree on it would be the position of the government. But who has kind of a role in shaping this more or who has less, it is difficult to say. It seems to Mölder that “the positions of Pro Patria or the Social Democrats in foreign policy might be stronger or they might have more capacity to fight for such issues because Pro Patria and the

Social Democrats were in the government longer than the Centre party, for example” (Mölder, 2018).

Thus, the process of foreign policy decision-making in Estonia is quite ordinary for the country with a parliamentary system. Political parties have more power in terms of policymaking. Bearing in mind the answers of the interviewees, public opinion does not play a great role in the process of foreign policy-making. As for the leader of Estonian foreign policy, a person who determines the foreign policy vector of the country, there is no a straightforward answer.

### *5.2.2. Fundamental issues in Estonia's foreign policy*

Altogether, the interviewees confirmed the analysis of party electoral programs and manifestos. The interviewees agreed that the main emphases in Estonian foreign policy are NATO and the EU. Besides, many of them connected Estonian foreign policy with Russia as a possible threat. Mölder said, that “original, Estonia wanted to become a member of the EU and NATO, to distance itself from Russia and to become a part of the Western community of states. Besides, Russia is on the other side of the border, always present as a probable threat” (Mölder, 2018). Lanko shared the view that NATO and the EU are the main issues. Besides, he considered that Russia is not an issue of Estonia's foreign policy; it is perceived as a threat to Estonia. “The Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service every year publishes a paper titled ‘Estonia in the International Security Environment’, and most of the paper is usually devoted to what is going on in Russia. At the same time, Estonia is not doing much to counter the Russian threat. Rather, Estonian elite places the burden to counter Russian threat on the shoulders of its partners in North America and Western Europe”, - explained Lanko (Lanko, 2019). During the interview, Veebel pointed out that the relations with NATO and the EU are crucial for Estonia because the EU gives money to Estonia and NATO perceives as a protector of the country. He also said that Russia is a fundamental issue (Veebel, 2017). It is rather interesting to note that only one interviewee mentioned the maintaining good relations with the USA as a fundamental one (Mölder, 2018).

Above all, there are smaller emphases in Estonia's foreign policy, e.g. questions of international security, Baltic and Scandinavian cooperation and condemnation of the “crimes of Communism” by all European nations. Mölder stressed that Estonia is always looking towards the Nordic countries and wants to establish a Nordic identity, that can be listed as one more emphasis of Estonian foreign policy (Mölder, 2018).

Considering all the answers, I may argue that NATO, the EU and Russia are the main issues in Estonian foreign policy, emphases was put on defense and economic dimensions of these

relations. Interviewees' answers fully correlate with my findings of the analysis of party electoral programs, that, in turn, might a double confirmation of the accuracy of these findings.

### *5.2.3. Evolution of Estonian foreign policy*

In order to understand whether above-listed emphases of Estonian foreign policy have been the same since 1999 and whether they are supported by all political parties represented in the Riigikogu, the following questions had been posed.

To begin with, I provide examples of the point of views regarding some changes in foreign policy of Estonia. Experts stressed that Estonian foreign policy had not changed so much since 2004; Lanko and Raik considered that there have not been many changes throughout almost twenty years. A deeper description of foreign policy's evolution was given by Lanko.

Since 2005, the Reform party dominated the Estonian Cabinet, thus, the Reform party is responsible for the current foreign policy course. The fact that for two and a half years, in 2016-2019, a representative of the Centre party held the position of the Prime Minister did not bring major change into the foreign policy course. Centrists did not have time to secure a change, and in my view, they did not want to make any changes to the course. Results of the 2019 parliamentary elections allow predicting that in 2019 a representative of the Reform party will again become the Prime Minister. Thus, Estonia will stick to the foreign policy course, which has not changed since 2004. It seems like serious changes are not possible (Lanko, 2019).

Raik hold an opinion that since 1999 Estonia develops as close relations with EU institutions and NATO as possible. In addition, Estonia maintains strong relations with the allies. As for the Estonian-Russian relations, they have some ups and downs since 2014. Estonia can do not really much to change it (Raik, 2019).

Mölder expressed doubts concerning fundamental changes in Estonian foreign policy. He said, "on the main dimensions like EU, Russia, nothing really has changed. In the parties themselves, I do not think anything has changed too much either" (Mölder, 2018).

Comparing these answers with the findings extracted from party electoral programs, we can see that the fundamental issues of Estonian foreign policy are still the same. NATO and EU membership, further integration within these structures, economic cooperation with Russia and an existence of possible threat from the Eastern neighbor are the emphases that mostly appear in party electoral programs since 1999.

As for the differences between political parties on foreign policy issues, Veebel said that parties do not have much differences. As for the 13<sup>th</sup> Riigikogu, the Reform Party was not a real opposition because it was a ruling party for a long time, they did not criticize parliament foreign

policy. The only one who was different and still is EKRE. Although, foreign policy still remains the same (Veebel, 2017).

Mölder considered that the first may be the most obvious line of division between parties is related to Russia. He also mentions EKRE and for this party Russia and things related to Russia are more threat than for other parties. This is something that separates the government and the opposition (Mölder, 2018). Vorotnikov shared the view that there have not been significant changes in Estonian foreign policy, there have been some differences on the issue of Russia (Vorotnikov, 2018).

It is interesting to note that the tendency of the similar emphases on foreign policy issues still remains. Raik said that in 2019 differences are very minor. “There is a broad consensus on foreign policy issues, even more than it was during the elections in 2015” (Raik, 2019).

#### *5.2.4. National debates on foreign policy issues*

Considering the fact that the majority of political parties in the Riigikogu have almost the same emphases on foreign policy issues, it is rather interesting to find out whether there are national debates on foreign policy or there are no alternative opinions at all.

Almost all the interviewees pointed out that there are some debates but they are not crucial. Kristi Raik gave an example that in November 2018 there were debates on migration, however it was topic for a while (Raik, 2019).

Martin Mölder stressed that there is a special format of debates in the Riigikogu called ‘debate on the national important topic’. He also mentioned migration as one of a debatable issue between political parties. Besides, Mölder said that everybody to some extent is cautious about international economic, railway across the Baltics, why it should be built, and how it should be built, some talks about the connection between Tallinn and Helsinki (Mölder, 2018).

Dmitri Lanko hold an opinion that formally there is a national debate. He explained that every year, Estonian Foreign Minister reports to the Riigikogu about the main threats and the actions undertaken by the Cabinet to counter those threats, and that it called a “foreign policy debate”. At the same time, sometimes there are substantive debates on foreign policy issues in the Riigikogu. In 2005, when Russia and Estonia signed the border treaty (which has not been ratified since then), most Estonian political parties favored ratification of the border treaty, but the Pro Patria objected it. Today, Estonian Foreign Minister have to answer the question, whether they have a “plan B” in case NATO and other partners in the West abandon Estonia in the situation of aggression from the East. However, none of the political parties represented in the Riigikogu, has come out with a draft of such “plan B”. There is a national consensus of foreign policy issues. No

matter which party hold the position of the Prime Minister or of the Foreign Minister, foreign policy does not change, and almost all political parties are happy about it (Lanko, 2019).

Along with Dmitri Lanko, Viljar Veebel stressed that everything is quite fixed in foreign policy, so there is nothing to debate. Everything is quite clear: Russia perceived as a possible threat, NATO perceived as a good protector. Veebel concluded that Estonia does not have a debate because it knows what is important (Veebel, 2017).

Answering this question, Vladislav Vorotnikov said that there is a domestic consensus on foreign policy issues which has been existed since 1991 (Vorotnikov, 2018).

Taking into account that 2019 is a year of parliamentary elections in Estonia, I asked the interviewees about their expectations about the results. The majority of experts stressed that it is rather hard to predict because the Reform Party and the Centre Party are equal and very close to each other in terms of the number of possible votes. Nevertheless, two of them said that the voters most probably would vote for the new faces and EKRE would be definitely in the Riigikogu (Lanko, 2019; Mölder, 2018; Raik, 2019).

### 5.3. Ratification Process in the Riigikogu

One of the strategies of obtaining support and developing consensus is to integrate domestic actors into the foreign policy decision-making. The exchange between influence for support is a usual way to enlarge consensus if it is a corporatist and consensual country (Bovens et al., 2007: 158; Andreweg and Irwin, 2009: 169). As it was mentioned in the Theoretical Framework Chapter, one of the elements of consensus is a procedural consensus, which can be found in the process of ratification of agreements/treaties and the voting process in Parliament. Here I study the ratification process of three foreign policy bills in the Riigikogu in order to answer the question whether there is a consensus between the main political parties.

#### 5.3.1. *Treaty on NATO accession*

On March 10, 2004 the Riigikogu ratified the North-Atlantic Treaty (Washington Treaty). Table 3 provides an overview of parliamentary support for the one of the most important treaties in Estonia's foreign policy since 1999, where the voting on the North-Atlantic Treaty is also presented.

Bill	Seats in favour	Seats against	Did not vote	Abstained
10.03.2004 262 The North Atlantic Treaty	85	0	16	0
20.06.2005 The agreement on the Estonian-Russian border	78	4	19	0
25.11.2015 108 SE The agreement on the Estonian-Russian maritime delimitation in Narva Bay and the Gulf of Finland	13	63	23	2
22.01.2019 767 Proposal for the government to stop the ratification process of the agreement on the Estonian-Russian maritime delimitation in Narva Bay and the Gulf of Finland	14	51	36	0
12.06.2003 81 AE Statement On the Future of the Institutions of the European Union	76	0	24	1

**TABLE 1. Bills and parliamentary support**

**Source: Riigikogu webpage**

Here we can see that the treaty was accepted by the majority of parliamentarians. None of them voted against the accession. It proves the assumption that NATO accession was one of the main goals for Estonia and its political parties. One more evidence of the strong Estonian position

towards the accession is the fact that despite Russian lobby for accession to the treaty of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), Estonia continued its course towards NATO and the EU and later successfully completed the ratification process (Huang, 2003: 84). It was a symbolic moment for Estonia's foreign policy team which successfully overcome all the challenges during the process of ratification.

During the debates on foreign policy issues in the Riigikogu which were held on 08.06.2004, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kristiina Ojuland said that for many years, Estonian foreign policy had been focused on NATO and EU membership. Today, Estonia is a NATO and the European Union member state. She stressed that it had taken almost thirteen years to meet the foreign policy goals. "The success of our foreign policy has been based on the achievement of the objectives set by domestic political consensus" (Stenogrammid. X Riigikogu, III istungjärg, Täiskogu korraline istung). Ojuland pointed out that NATO and the EU membership have undoubtedly ensured Estonia's security and thereby increased the opportunities for both companies and people. NATO is a security guarantee that Estonia has never had before. The enlargement of the European Union has increased security and its internal market has been open to Estonia's exports without restrictions. Membership in both NATO and the European Union will mean a qualitative leap in our national security strengthening and at the same time also growing commitment to the cooperation with allies ensuring security (Ibid).

### *5.3.2. Treaty on Estonian-Russian border*

Question of the ratification of the treaty on Estonian-Russian border has been on the agenda since 1991. On 20 June, 2005, the Riigikogu ratified the treaty on Estonian-Russian border. According to the results of voting, 78 parliamentarians favoured the ratification, while 4 of them were against and 19 did not vote (see Table 3). Taking into account that this treaty concerns a question of state border, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, its ratification requires the consent of two thirds of the deputies, i.e. the support of 68 members of the Riigikogu. Here we can see that required number of deputies voted for the ratification of the treaty and it could enter into force. Nevertheless, the treaty did not enter into force because the Russian Parliament refused to ratify the treaty, referring to an unacceptable amendment of the treaty's preamble for the Russian side (Regnum, 24.05.2018).

During the Riigikogu session on 22 May, 2013, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Urmas Paet answering the question whether Estonia needs this treaty, said that the treaty was discussed in the Riigikogu quite enough. After 2015, nothing has changed and he does not remember that

someone prevented the discussion of this issue (Stenogrammid. XII Riigikogu, V Istungjärk, infotund).

In 2014, the new treaty on Estonian-Russian border was signed in Moscow by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of two countries. Later, the treaty has to be considered by the Parliaments for ratification (Õhtuleht, 2014; TASS, 2019; Regnum, 2018). The two sides had previously agreed that the ratification process would be conducted in parallel (Consulate General of Estonian in St. Petersburg webpage).

On 25 November, 2015 the Riigikogu completed the first reading of the bill on ratification of the treaty and suspended the ratification process pending the response of the Russian Parliament (Interfax, 2017). It is important to note, that during the Riigikogu sessions, EKRE and the Free Party several times (25.11.2015 and 22.01.2019) initiated the process of refusal to ratify the border treaty with Russia and the withdrawal of Estonia's signature under the treaty. However, this bill was not supported by other parliamentarians (see Table 3).

Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marina Kaljurand, pointed out that the ratification of treaties with Russia would have a positive impact on the security of Estonia, as well as it would help to increase stability and predictability in relations between states and would help to eliminate misunderstandings on such an important topic (Postimees, 25.11.2015).

The discussion on the treaty on Estonian-Russian border continued in 2018, when Prime Minister of Estonia, Chairman of the Centre party Jüri Ratas confirmed that he continues to support the completion of the ratification of the Estonian-Russian border agreement. Ratas emphasized that Russia's actions in Ukraine should be considered outside this process (ERR.ee, 2019). Nevertheless, the Russian minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov stressed that the bill will be ratified in the Parliament if relations between states become stable and non-confrontational (Ibid).

### *5.3.3 Statement On the Future of the Institutions of the European Union*

Bearing in mind that the EU is mentioned in Estonia's foreign policy line as one of the emphases, it is important to study the ratification of the bill related to the EU. On June 12, 2003 the Riigikogu was considering the Statement On the future of the institutions of the European Union (81 AE) submitted by 23 members of the Riigikogu. The voting results were the following: 76 votes in favour the Statement, nobody voted against it, one member of the Riigikogu abstained (see Table 3). According to this Statement, The Riigikogu supported the enlargement of the role of the national parliaments and the European Parliament in the decision-making process, and the proceeding of the work of the European Convention. Besides, the Riigikogu supported the



strengthening of the role of national parliaments and the European Parliament in decision-making processes, as well as the continuation of the Convention on the future of Europe.

Before few days, when the bill was ratified by the parliamentarians, debates on the issue of foreign policy had been in the Riigikogu. During the speech, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kristiina Ojuland stressed that the war in Iraq and security-related questions had initiated the discussions on the institutions of the European Union and on defense and security policy in the Convention on the future of Europe. Besides, she pointed out that public support for accession to the European Union among Estonians rose to 59% by the end of May. So, Estonia supports the European security and defense policy, the development and strengthening of the European Union, and country is ready to participate in EU policy (Stenogrammid X Riigikogu stenogramm I istungjärg).

Thus, the bill “On the future of the institutions of the European Union” passed through the Parliament in its first reading without any limitations and amendments.

#### 5.4. Discussion

To answer the research questions which are aiming to identify whether there has been foreign policy consensus and in particular whether changes of it have been in the case of Estonia since 1999, and to answer what the role of political parties in foreign policy decision-making process in Estonia, QCA analysis of electoral programs/manifestos, author-conducted interviews and parliament proceedings, was applied to this study. In order to conduct accurate research, I have collected and analyzed data from different sources: party electoral programs/manifestos, parliament proceedings on the three foreign policy bills and interviews that I did on my own. Though, as part of an introductory analysis, I noticed that there have not been major differences between political parties on foreign policy issues. Therefore, in this section, I compare and summarize findings from both the electoral programs/manifestos, parliament proceedings, and ratification process and interview analysis, and proceed with the evaluation of this study in comparison to the theoretical models that I have chosen for my research.

When studying the main elements of consensus in Estonia that are listed in Melanson’s consensus theory, I would like to start with the first element – policy consensus – which indicates the main goals and specific orientation of country’s foreign policy. According to the information retrieved from the electoral programs and party manifestos which are presented in the previous section, I argue that policy consensus exists in Estonian foreign policy. As it was mentioned, we can see that the main emphases in Estonia’s foreign policy have been the same since 1999 among all political parties presented in the Riigikogu. Noteworthy among them is a course towards

harmonization of the relations with the western allies, active participation in the EU and NATO's activities, increasing in contributions to NATO at the level of 2% of GDP. Nevertheless, there are several issues where parties have slightly different positions, they cover the relations with Russia and issues related to the permanent basis. For example, EKRE take a stronger position towards Russia-related issues than other parties, so EKRE argue for the ratification of the agreement that is based on the Treaty of Tartu, whilst other parties do not strictly allocate to this treaty. As for the permanent basis, EKRE propose to have independent arms and weapons because it seems to them unacceptable to have French arms in Estonia whilst France can use these weapons against the Baltic States. Even though, these differences are mitigated by signing a coalition treaty and it may be the reason why the main foreign policy vector of the country does not change so much. Moreover, coalition treaty also partly explains a lack of debates on the most part of foreign policy initiatives. At the same time, if there is no debate on these issues, it serves one more proof of the presence of national consensus on foreign policy issues between the main political parties.

The second element of consensus, according to Melanson, is a procedural consensus. In the previous section I considered the ratification process of three foreign policy bills in the Riigikogu. Based on the voting results, I may assume that procedural consensus also presents in Estonian foreign policy. Three bills were accepted by the majority of parliamentarians without strong disagreements during readings on them. Nevertheless, if some disagreements happened, as it was with the ratification of the Estonian-Russian border agreement, they did not find any support of the majority of the parliamentarians, on the contrary, they met a strong opposition.

The perceptions of the interviewees and the information extracted from the electoral programs of political parties are similar on the fundamental issues in Estonia's foreign policy. Unsurprisingly, all experts pointed out three main emphases on Estonian foreign policy (the EU, NATO and Russia) which are the same with the emphases declared in party programs. Among other things, interviewees confirmed that the process of foreign policy decision-making in Estonia is quite ordinary for the country with a parliamentary system, where political parties have more power in terms of policy-making while public opinion does not influence foreign policy decision-making. So, it can illustrate the situation when foreign policy decisions are taken by political elite, where the latest maybe an indicator of foreign policy consensus. Finally, some interviewees during our conversation mentioned the existence of foreign policy consensus among main political parties in Estonia that can be an extra argument of its existence.

Returning to the research questions raised at the beginning of this study, it is now can be stated that no major changes have occurred in the foreign policy consensus from 1999 to 2019. These changes could appear, especially taking into account the position of EKRE, but strong commitment to the coalition treaty mitigates the situation and creates the atmosphere of consensus.

As for the interviewees, experts stressed that Estonian foreign policy has not changed so much over the past twenty years. However, it was pointed out that there were some ups and downs with Estonian-Russian relations.

Almost all the interviewees pointed out that there are some debates on the issues of foreign policy but they are not crucial. As it was mentioned in the interviews, formally there is a national debate in the Riigikogu, when Estonian Foreign Minister reports to the Riigikogu about the main threats and the actions undertaken by the Cabinet to counter those threats. However, in fact, there is a national consensus on foreign policy issues; no matter which party hold the position of the Prime Minister or of the Foreign Minister, everything is quite fixed in foreign policy. This statement is confirmed both by the interviewees and the analyzing the foreign policy line of the country since 1999.

Turning to the answer to the last question of the study; I think that it is possible to assess the influence of internal factors, such as political parties, on the formation of the country's foreign policy, and in this case I go so far as to say that this influence was fundamental. I cannot clearly say that the political parties are the only one actors who determine the foreign policy line of the country. Nonetheless, I argue that in a case of Estonia, foreign policymaking is the interplay between the parliament, the opposition, and the Cabinet, consisting of representatives of the ruling parties.

Thus, considering all the facts, I may assume that the hypothesis of the thesis that there has been domestic consensus among political parties represented in the Riigikogu on Estonian foreign policy since 1999 is confirmed. Political parties play the major role in foreign policy decision-making, thus, also to some extent define foreign policy course of the country, which has not considerably changed since 1999 in the case of Estonia.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the aim was to examine the evolution of Estonian foreign policy from 1999 to 2019 and in particular to analyse the developments regarding the foreign policy consensus among Estonian political parties. In addition, I demonstrated the role of political parties in foreign policy decision-making. I also intended to show whether there was a diversity in foreign policy emphases between party electoral programs and author-conducted interviews with a group of political elite. The empirical findings of this study resulted in a new understanding of the continuity of Estonian foreign policy since 1999.

According to liberal theory national characteristics of individual states define their actions on the international arena (Moravcsik, 2010: 2). In liberal terms, especially within Republican Liberalism proposed by Moravcsik, the primary actors of world politics are individuals and social groups, whose interests determine the preferences of the state and its goals in world politics (Doyle, 1986: 1153). In my research, I supposed that political parties are represented by social groups which, in turn, compete through foreign policy ideas listed in their electoral programs and manifestos with other parties to determine the vector of the state's foreign policy. Moreover, I assumed that there might be some minor differences on the issues of foreign policy between parties, that do not considerably influence the main emphases of foreign policy line of the country. At the same time, if there are no fundamental differences on these aspects, it can be assumed that there is a national consensus on foreign policy issues between the main political parties. Thus, the theory of consensus was studied in the current research as well. In the study, I applied the definition of consensus elaborated by Kerr and Heffernan, which sounds the following way: consensus reflects the dominant a set of ideas that define what political actors can and cannot do and promotes actions in accordance with the established agenda. In order to answer the question of whether there has been a foreign policy consensus or not, it was necessary to find out what the consensus consists of. I used the theory of consensus presented by Richard Melanson, where consensus implies three elements: policy, cultural and procedural consensus (Melanson, 2005: 6-12). To narrow down the focus of my research in order to go deeper in my study, in the Master's thesis, I focused on policy and procedural elements of consensus only.

My hypothesis with my thesis was that there has been domestic consensus among political parties represented in the Riigikogu on Estonian foreign policy since 1999. Though the international situation changed significantly in 2014 with the situation in Crimea and in 2015 with the migration crisis, and EKRE takes a different view of Estonia's foreign policy vector: domestic foreign policy consensus does not fall apart due to a firm commitment to the coalition agreement, which softens the situation and creates an atmosphere of consensus.

Applying consensus theory to the Estonian case, in the Analytical chapter of the current study, I confirmed the existence of policy consensus in Estonia. I analyzed party electoral programs and manifestos of political parties represented in the Riigikogu from 1999 to 2019, utilizing QCA as a method of research, with the following coding frame: category – foreign policy, subcategories:

1. NATO (defense, military bases, Iraq, Afghanistan);
2. European Union (defense, economy, new members, cyber-threats, agriculture);
3. Russia (cyber-threats, military threat, tourism, economic cooperation).

During the process of analysis, I found out that Estonian political parties have almost the same emphases in their party electoral programs in the section of foreign policy and defense. Parties stand for further integration into EU institutions, close cooperation with NATO and increasing Estonia's contributions to NATO at the level of 2% of GDP. Parties have slightly different positions on Russia-related issues, especially the view of the ratification of the Estonian-Russian border agreement. Nevertheless, as it was mentioned in the Discussion sub-chapter, these differences are mitigated by signing a coalition treaty, which is an integral part of the Government formation and the work of Riigikogu. In addition to the analysis of party documents, I conducted interviews with experts in Estonian foreign policy. Interview questions included questions about the main emphases of country's foreign policy and some questions about differences between parties. It was rather interesting to note that interviewees pointed out the same foreign policy emphases (the EU, NATO and Russia), which were listed in the party electoral programs and manifestos, and the interviewees' answers coincided with my own findings. Taking these findings into account, I assumed that policy consensus exists in Estonia.

In order to figure out whether there has been procedural consensus in Estonia, I considered the ratification process of three foreign policy bills in the Riigikogu. After analysis of the voting results and Riigikogu's proceedings on these bills, I came to the conclusion that procedural consensus is present in Estonian foreign policy.

Besides, during my research, I analyzed party electoral programs in chronological order that allowed me to track the evolution of domestic consensus on foreign policy issues. As a result, I found that political parties have hold the same foreign policy course, with some differences in the minor issues, that have not impacted on the consensus policy.

The last but not least research question of the current research was devoted to the relationship between domestic policy and foreign policy, especially what the role of political parties is. During analysis, the form of Estonia's political system (which is a parliamentary one), was taken into account. I assumed that political parties are the key domestic actors that shape the foreign policy course of the country. Thus, looking at domestic policy and electoral programs of

political parties, where official priorities and preferences of the party are listed, some predictions of future foreign policy can be discovered.

Nevertheless, certain limitations are imposed to obtained results. Firstly, it was not my aim to evaluate the role of public opinion in the process of foreign policy-making, but rather, these findings were obtained from the interview data. Secondly, unfortunately, no representatives of the Riigikogu have been interviewed due to lack of opportunities to reach this high ranking significant cohort. Thirdly, with regard to the theoretical model used, some subcategories lead to a much smaller amount of processed content than others; nevertheless, this aspect did not invalidate the explanatory power of the model, and the revision of the model based on empirical data was not necessary. Finally, there can be debatable issues regarding the interviews because they were conducted not simultaneously but with some time differences that can influence the answers.

This research has presented many aspects for further investigation. More research is required in order to understand whether the third element of consensus – cultural consensus – exists in Estonia. Besides, if one involves different sources of all verbatim records of an annual session on the issue of foreign policy in the Riigikogu since 1999 to conduct a more extensive document analysis, this could be a great help to other researchers.

Nevertheless, I assume that the results of this research produced significant and fresh findings. This study contributed to expand the study of Estonian foreign policy under a light of liberalist point of view including its internal and external factors; and it also made a contribution to the studies of the role of political parties in foreign policy decision-making. This work can be useful for Estonian political elite and foreign policy analysis learning.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Questionnaire 1.

1. What are the differences on the issues of foreign policy between the ruling party (the current ruling party) and the opposition?
2. Could you please explain what issues are the most fundamental in Estonian foreign policy from your point of view?
3. Do you think that there is a public debate on the questions of foreign policy in Estonia?
4. How do you estimate the role of public opinion in creating foreign policy course? Does public opinion exist?
5. Do the groups of Eurosceptic parties/organizations exist in Estonia? (in party politics)
6. How has the foreign policy line of political parties developed from the 1990s until today?
7. Who is a leader of Estonian foreign policy? (the one who determines foreign policy position of the Government)
8. What are your expectations about the results of the Parliamentary elections in 2019?

Appendix 2. Questionnaire 2.

1. Could you please tell me something about your position and your expertise and how it is related to Estonian foreign policy making and/or Estonian political parties?
2. Please tell me about the connection between domestic politics and foreign policy in Estonia.
3. Could you please describe the foreign policy decision-making process in Estonia?
4. What is the role of political parties in this foreign policy decision-making?
5. Which political parties have been most influential in foreign policy decision-making? How and why so?
6. Could you please explain what issues are the most fundamental in Estonian foreign policy from your point of view?
7. Do you think that there is a public debate on the questions of foreign policy in Estonia?
8. How do you estimate the role of public opinion in creating foreign policy course?
9. What are the differences on the issues of foreign policy between the ruling party (the current ruling party) and the opposition?
10. How has the foreign policy line of political parties developed from the 1990s until today?
11. Would you say that there has been a foreign policy consensus in Estonia? Has there been any changes in this consensus (or lack thereof)?
12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about regarding the role of political parties in foreign policy making and about the differences between foreign policy lines of different parties?



Appendix 3. Election results by political parties from 1999 to 2019

<b>Year</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Percent %</b>	<b>Mandates</b>
1999	Centre Party	23.41	28
1999	Reform Party	15.92	18
1999	Pro Patria Union	16.09	18
1999	Moderates	15.21	17
1999	Estonian Country People's Party	7.27	7
1999	Coalition Party	7.58	7
1999	United People's Party of Estonia	6.13	6
2003	Centre Party	25.4	28
2003	Res Publica	24.6	28
2003	Reform Party	17.7	19
2003	Estonia's Peoples Union	13.0	13
2003	Pro Patria Union	7.3	7
2003	Moderates	7.0	6
2007	Reform Party	27.8	31
2007	Centre Party	26.1	29
2007	Pro Patria and Res Publica Union	17.9	19
2007	Estonian Social Democratic Party	10.6	10
2007	Estonia's Peoples Union	7.1	6
2007	Estonian Greens	7.1	6
2011	Reform Party	28.6	33
2011	Centre Party	23.3	26
2011	Pro Patria and Res Publica Union	20.5	23
2011	Social Democratic Party	17.1	19
2015	Reform Party	27.7	30
2015	Centre Party	24.8	27
2015	Social Democratic Party	15.2	15
2015	Pro Patria and Res Publica Union	13.7	14
2015	Estonian Free Party	8.7	8
2015	Conservative People's Party of Estonia	8.1	7
2019	Reform Party	28.9	34
2019	Centre Party	23.1	26
2019	Conservative People's Party of Estonia	17.8	19
2019	Pro Patria	11.4	12
2019	Social Democratic Party	9.8	10

Source: Data provided by Valimiskomisjon (vvk.ee)